MONDAY
January 26, 2026

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GOVT. OF PUNJAB

Warm greetings
to all on the
occasion of the

77th

Republic Day

"The true spirit of Republic Day is realized only when every citizen enjoys the right to equality. In Punjab, we have ensured that quality education and world-class healthcare are not privileges of the few, but fundamental rights of every common citizen. Health and education are foundation of strong nation. On this Republic Day, let us take a pledge to build an educated and healthy India."

Jai Hind!

Bhagwant Singh Mann
Chief Minister, Punjab

1092/18/2025-26/7514

Department of Information and Public Relations, Punjab

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MAN WHO SAW IT ALL

Veteran journalist Mark Tully dies at 90

NEWS » PAGE 16

DATA POINT

Budget expectations from a gender lens

What to do to unlock women's participation

OPINION » PAGE 13

DEMOLITION JOB

Abhishek and bowlers seal series for India

SPORT » PAGE 19

Parties allege plot to exclude Assam voters

Six Opposition parties write to the Chief Electoral Officer, say a large number of fake objections were filed during the special revision process

Rahul Karmakar
GUWAHATI

Inclusion check: People browsing the voter list during the special revision of electoral rolls in Guwahati in January. PTI

Leaders of the Congress and five other Opposition parties in Assam on Sunday submitted a memorandum to the State's Chief Electoral Officer, alleging that fake objections were being filed to remove voters from the draft rolls during the special revision (SR) exercise.

They alleged widespread legal violations, political interference, and targeted harassment of genuine voters, which they called "arbitrary, unlawful, and unconstitutional".

Illegal bulk objections were filed during the claims and objections phase of the SR which ended on January 22, mostly on grounds of death or permanent shifting of voters, they added.

They cited a public statement by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, asserting that the government "will do some *utpaat* [disturbance] within the ambit of the law" to keep Bengali Muslims under pressure by issuing notices to them during the SR exercise. Such an "arbitrary, malafide, and unconstitutional" statement "reveals a predetermined intent to target a specific community and undermines the neutrality of the electoral process", the parties said.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 14

India a messenger of peace amid conflicts in the world: Murmu

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu on Sunday said India was spreading the message of peace in a world marked by conflict, asserting that global harmony was essential for securing the future of humanity.

Addressing the nation on the eve of the 77th Republic Day, the President touched upon a wide range of themes, including national security, women's empowerment, poverty alleviation, economic growth, and democratic governance, while positioning India's role in the world within its civilisational ethos.

"In our tradition, we have been offering prayers for peace to prevail in the entire universe. The future of humanity can remain secure only if there is peace in the whole world. In an atmosphere marked by conflicts in many parts of the world, India is spreading the message of peace."

> The future of humanity can remain secure only if there is peace in the whole world. In an atmosphere marked by conflicts... India is spreading the message of peace
>
> **DROUPADI MURMU**
> President of India

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PRESIDENT ON ELECTION » PAGE 15

NEARBY

SIR: Over 9,400 migrant workers leave city

BENGALURU
More than 9,400 migrant workers from West Bengal living in Bengaluru have returned home after receiving SIR notices. » PAGE 6

Police from three States search for missing cash

BELAGAVI
The Belagavi police on Sunday joined their Goa and Maharashtra counterparts probing the ₹400 crore heist at Chorla Ghat at the intersection of the three States. » PAGE 8

EDUCATIONPLUS » PAGE 9

White valley

Snow trek: Boys walk through a snow-covered orchard after fresh snowfall in Budgam district of J&K on Sunday. IMRAN NISSAR

KSRTC plans new Flybus fleet for Kempegowda International Airport

Darshan Devaiah B.P.
BENGALURU

The Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) is planning to introduce a new fleet of buses to its Flybus services to the Kempegowda International Airport, as most of the existing golden-coloured Volvo coaches operating on the route have become old.

At present, the KSRTC operates Flybus services on 15 routes connecting the airport with major cities and towns - Mysuru (nine routes), Madikeri (two), Davangere (two), and Kundapur (two). In total, 44 Flybus trips are operated every day, covering around 10,240 km and serving close to 1,050 passengers daily.

The Flybus service is positioned as a premium airport commute option.

However, officials said many of the buses currently deployed on these routes were ageing Volvo models, prompting the corporation to explore replacement options.

Sources in KSRTC said that the proposal to induct new buses was still at an initial stage and funds were yet to be allocated for the procurement. "At present, everything is in the preliminary phase. Though there is a clear request and requirement for new buses on the Flybus routes, financial approval has not yet been granted," a official source told *The Hindu*.

As part of its assessment, KSRTC recently conducted trial runs using Airavat Club Class 2.0 seater buses. These buses, part of Volvo's 9600 series, are 15 metres long and feature a larger cabin with around 51 plush seats arranged in a 2x2 layout.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 6

Nation honours 131 personalities with Padma awards

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Centre on Sunday announced Padma honours for 2026, with five Padma Vibhushan, 13 Padma Bhushan, and 113 Padma Shri awards. The recipients include eight personalities from Kerala, 11 from West Bengal, and 13 from Tamil Nadu, all poll-bound States.

A former Kerala Chief Minister and Communist stalwart, the late V.S. Achuthanandan, and the late actor Dharmendra have been posthumously named for the Padma Vibhushan, the country's second highest civilian award. Former Supreme Court judge K.T. Thomas and educationist P. Narayanan, both from Kerala, and violinist N. Rajam are the other three to get the Padma Vibhushan.

A former Jharkhand Chief Minister and tribal leader, the late Shibu Soren, has been named for the Padma Bhushan posthumously.

Diverse disciplines

Actor Mammootty, singer Alka Yagnik, banker Uday Kotak, and tennis legend Vijay Amritraj are among the 13 selected for the Padma Bhushan.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated all the awardees for their contribution to diverse fields.

"Congratulations to all the Padma Awardees for their outstanding contributions to our nation. Their excellence, dedication, and service enrich the fabric of our society," he said in a post on X.

The Padma awards are given in disciplines such as social work, public affairs, science and engineering, trade and industry, medicine, literature and education, sports, civil service, among others. While the Padma Vibhushan is awarded for exceptional and distinguished service, Padma Bhushan is for distinguished service of high order, and Padma Shri for distinguished service in any field.

MORE REPORTS ON » PAGES 2, 14

Field of honour

The Padma honours for 2026 announced by the Centre include **5 Padma Vibhushan, 13 Padma Bhushan, and 113 Padma Shri awards**, covering personalities from all corners of the country in over 100 unique fields

PADMA VIBHUSHAN

- Dharmendra Singh Deol — Art (Posthumous)
- K.T. Thomas — Public Affairs
- N. Rajam — Art
- P. Narayanan — Literature and Education
- V.S. Achuthanandan — Public Affairs (Posthumous)

PADMA BHUSHAN

1. Alka Yagnik
2. Bhagat Singh Koshyari
3. K.R. Palaniswamy
4. Mammootty
5. Nori Dattatreyudu
6. Piyush Pandey (posthumous)
7. S.K.M. Maeilanandhan
8. Shatavadhani R. Ganesh
9. Shibu Soren (Posthumous)
10. Uday Kotak
11. V. K. Malhotra (Posthumous)
12. Vellappally Natesan
13. Vijay Amritraj

M BG-BGE

Relentless Saina pushes limits, shows the way for Gen Next

The badminton ace bows out of the international arena on her own terms after a storied career, whose seeds were sown at the Philippines Open in 2006; the 2012 London Olympics bronze medallist held the door open long enough for others to walk in

Devyanshi Bihani

Some athletes enchant. Others enable. Saina Nehwal belongs firmly to the latter. She did not decorate the sport; she made it survivable for the next generation. Watching Nehwal was never about aesthetics. It was about her conviction and the stubborn belief that she would hold a little longer even when the lungs burned, muscles screamed in pain and the legs turned heavy.

Gill Clark once wrote that champions relentlessly push their limits and refuse to give up – a mindset so ingrained that stopping feels like a contradiction of who they are. Which is why retirement is rarely announced when it actually happens. The body gives up long before the mind accepts it.

For nearly two years, Saina knew that her knee could not cope with elite training, but it was only last week that she brought down the curtains on her decorated career. Cartilage degeneration and arthritis. A body that once tolerated eight or nine hours of work now surrendering in one or two. "I had stopped playing two years ago. I actually felt that I entered the sport on my own terms and left on my own terms," Saina, on a podcast, spoke about why she saw no urgency to announce her retirement. "If you are not capable of playing anymore, that is it. It is fine." Perhaps she needed time not to decide, but to accept.

By then, there was nothing left to prove. She had already done the harder work – holding the door open long enough for others to walk in.

The burden of firsts

Badminton ran in her blood from the start. Born in Haryana in 1990, Saina was introduced to the sport by her mother Usha, a former State-level player, when she was eight. But before that, she had a tryst with karate, a sport she took up because badminton coaching was scarce in the state. She even went on to earn a brown belt before her family moved to Hyderabad. At 13, she joined the Pullela Gopichand Academy, and her path became clear.

In 2006, at just 16, the then youngster arrived at the Philippines Open as an unseeded teenager and left as the champion. Along the way, she stunned higher-ranked opponents, including Germany's Xu Huaiwen and Japan's Ai Goto, to become the first Indian woman to not only reach but also win a four-star international tournament.

It was an achievement that arrived too early considering the system around her. India was not yet prepared to process a teenage girl winning abroad in a sport that barely occupied space in public consciousness. Saina herself seemed surprised by it. She said she simply played her "natural game" and let the rest happen.

Two years later, in Pune, she became the world junior champion beating Japan's Sayako Sato in the final and was the first Indian to achieve the feat. Winning on home soil should have felt like a coronation. Instead, it felt like a contract. The runner-up at the previous junior Worlds in Korea had become the standard bearer.

The real rupture came in Jakarta in 2009. At the Indonesia Open, one of the most unforgiving stops on the circuit, Saina beat China's Lin Wang in a final that swung violently in momentum. She lost the first game, recovered in the second, and then surged through the decider with an audacity that felt unfamiliar for an Indian player on that stage. When she lifted the trophy, she became the first Indian to win a Super Series title. It remains one of the most important wins of her career because it signalled that Indian badminton was no longer aspirational. It was competitive.

Firsts followed, bringing with them a growing weight of expectation.

At the 2010 Commonwealth Games in Delhi, Saina became the first Indian to win women's singles gold, surviving a match point before turning the final against Wong Mew Choo of Malaysia into an assertion of nerve and stamina. That same year, she became the first Indian woman to win a medal (bronze) at the Asian Championships.

In 2011, she won the Swiss Open and the very next year, she claimed the crown at the Denmark Open, one of Europe's oldest and most prestigious tournaments. Each title pushed her into spaces Indian women had never stood before.

The 2012 London Olympics changed everything. Saina secured India's first badminton medal at the Olympics and became only the second Indian woman overall, after legendary weightlifter Karnam Malleswari, to make the podium at the quadrennial extravaganza. The bronze came in strange circumstances, with China's Wang Xin injured in the playoff and retiring with a painful knee while leading 21-18, 1-0.

What is often forgotten is the path that led there. A semifinal draw with three Chinese players. Staying fit became her competitive advantage. As coach P. Gopi Chand pointed out, "there was no doubt Saina richly deserved the Olympic medal for her pioneering campaign for Indian badminton, after making the quarterfinals of Beijing as a smart 18-year-old with so much promise."

In 2014, she guided Indian women to their first Uber Cup medal, remaining unbeaten throughout the campaign. In the same year, she won the China Open Super Series Premier becoming the first Indian woman to conquer badminton's most intimidating territory. Beating top Chinese players on their home soil made it one of her most symbolic title victories. The then World No. 5 Indian prevailed 21-12, 22-20 over a 17-year-old Akane Yamaguchi in a 42-minute final.

> I had stopped playing two years ago. I actually felt that I entered the sport on my own terms and left on my own terms. If you are not capable of playing anymore, that is it. It is fine
>
> **SAINA NEHWAL**

Then, in April 2015, the Indian ace rose to World No. 1, holding that spot for 14 weeks, nine of them uninterrupted. She was the first non-Chinese woman since Denmark's Tine Baun in 2010 to climb the peak and the first Indian to get there since Prakash Padukone had reached No.1 in the men's game 35 years earlier.

When she won the All England Open later that year, she became the first Indian woman to lift one of the sport's most storied trophies. By then, her career had become a map of thresholds crossed. Each victory carried not just personal meaning. Each 'first' stretched the imagination of what Indian badminton, especially the women shuttlers, could be.

Rivals who defined her

The pathbreaker's career would not have been the one it was without the players who forced her to confront the limits of her game. When Saina squared up against Tai Tzu Ying, contrasting styles collided. Tai's gift for slowing rallies, disguising her shots and bending angles posed problems that Saina's direct, stamina-driven game struggled to solve. Their rivalry tilted decisively in Tai's favour: Saina won only five of their 20 meetings. Ratchanok Intanon brought grace of a similar kind, but with a more classical, readable rhythm. Her artistry invited long rallies rather than scrambles. Here, Saina's endurance usually prevailed as she won 12 of their 20 encounters.

Then there was Carolina Marin's speed, aggression and left-handed ferocity. Against Marin, Saina ran into a version of the game that arrived too fast, too sharp. Their rivalry was almost perfectly balanced with Marin edging it 7-6.

Above all was China. For years, the Chinese wall felt immovable. Wang Yihan, in particular, became a recurring barrier. Saina lost more often than she won (five victories against 11 defeats) and quarterfinal exits began to pile up. Alongside Wang Yihan stood Wang Shixian, who turned rallies into marathons and pushed Saina into exhausting exchanges, their head-to-head locked at seven wins apiece. And there was London Olympic champion Li Xuerui; her rise coincided with Saina's own Olympic peak and her dominance over the Indian with a 12-2 record reflected the gap in the systems of the two countries.

Then came Jakarta, 2015. When Saina beat Wang Yihan in the World championships quarterfinals, it was more relief than victory. Years of unfinished business boiled down to one long, draining encounter. That win ensured her first World championships medal and triggered something unprecedented: for the first time, no Chinese woman made it to the semifinals.

And even as those battles faded, new ones emerged. Nozomi Okuhara brought relentless defence and speed, at a time when Saina's body was beginning to fray. At home, P. V. Sindhu became a mirror, a reminder that the sport she once dominated was moving beyond her.

The price of politics

At her peak, the former World No. 1 enjoyed near-unanimous adoration. That, too, changed.

Saina's decision to step into politics altered the nature of her public life. In 2021, she joined the BJP at a ceremony in New Delhi, speaking of her admiration for Prime Minister Narendra Modi and expressing a desire to contribute beyond sport. Party leaders hailed her as a 'youth icon' and cited her achievements as national pride. In an increasingly polarised climate, the move blurred the line between Saina the athlete and Saina the political figure. Online spaces that had once celebrated her victories argued over her choices.

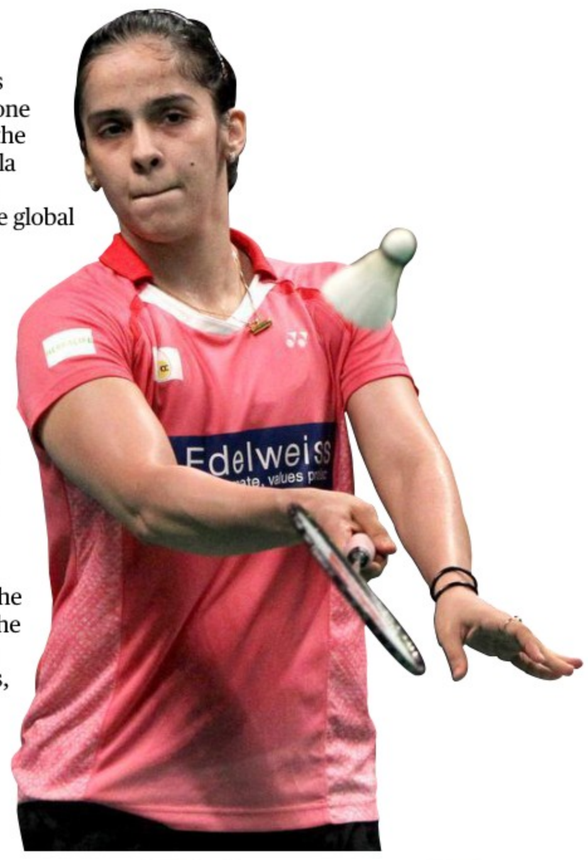
Politics may have complicated how she was received, but it cannot rewrite what she did. Honoured with the Arjuna Award, Khel Ratna, Padma Shri and Padma Bhushan, Saina's sporting legacy rests on achievements that remain unquestioned.

What she left behind

India had produced highly successful badminton players before Saina. Prakash Padukone and Gopi Chand had won at the highest level. Players like Jwala Gutta had shown that Indian women could compete on the global stage. But it was Saina who sparked a badminton revolution in her home country, as Clark observed.

Today, India has 11 men and 12 women players ranked in the world's top-100 in singles, placing it among the most represented badminton nations globally. That depth did not arrive by accident. It arrived because belief became institutional.

Saina may not have been the most naturally gifted. What she built instead was a career on hard work, mental toughness, and absolute refusal to give up. Indian badminton will move on – stronger, deeper, louder. But it will always move on the ground she flattened first.



THE GIST

- Badminton ran in Saina's blood from the start. Born in Haryana in 1990, she was introduced to the sport by her mother Usha, a former State-level player, at the age of eight
- In the 2012 London Olympics, she secured India's first badminton medal at the Games and became the second Indian woman, after weightlifter Malleswari, to make the podium
- Saina's career was built on hard work, mental toughness, and absolute refusal to give up

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Eight from Karnataka honoured with Padma awards

They are from an array of fields, from Art to Trade and Industry; three of the awardees are in the category of 'Unsung heroes'

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Shatavadhani R. Ganesh and former BJP Rajya Sabha member Prabhakar B. Kore are among the eight personalities from Karnataka to feature on the list of Padma awardees this year, announced on the eve of Republic Day.

While Dr. Ganesh has been awarded Padma Bhushan in the category of Art, three among the Padma Shri awardees- Anke Gowda M. from Mandya district, Suresh Hanagavadi from Davangere, S.G. Susheelamma from Bengaluru- have been identified as "Unsung heroes."

Shatavadhani R. Ganesh
Sholar and artist, Mr. Ganesh is the only personality from Karnataka to figure in the Padma Bhushan category. He is widely acclaimed for reviving and mastering avadhana, an ancient art form.

An alumnus of the Indian Institute of Science and a student of Metallurgy, Dr. Ganesh, a writer in Kannada and Sanskrit, is credited with the revival of the tradition of Avadhana in Kannada. Avadhana requires focus, concentration and alertness among other skills to compose poetry or face literary challenges posed by other scholars simultaneously in a unique literary event. He is also the author of several works.

S.G. Susheelamma
A well-known social activist from Bengaluru and the driving force behind the non-profit organisation Sumangali Seva Ashrama, Ms. Susheelamma has been selected for the Padma Shri Award 2026 in recognition of her decades-long commitment to social service.

She is widely respected for her work with abandoned women, orphaned children and marginalised sections of society.

Ms. Susheelamma told *The Hindu* that she had never sought accolades or public acknowledgement for her work. She said the award was a result of "divine grace and the goodwill of the people". Recalling the early days of her organisation, she said the ashram was established in October, 1975, after she encountered children in urgent need of shelter and care. "I decided to take responsibility for their wellbeing, which eventually led to the formation of the institution." The ashram has expanded its activities to include a nursery and higher primary school, adult literacy initiatives, health check-up camps, etc.

Suresh Hanagavadi
JJM medical college professor and founder of the Karnataka Haemophilia Society (KHS), Dr. Hanagavadi began researching Haemophilia after he found that he was suffering from the condition. He founded the KHS with the support of play back singer S.P. Balasubramanyam. Over the years, he has treated several thousand children and adults suffering from Haemophilia.

He told reporters in Davangere that he was happy that the cause of Haemophilia had been recognised at the national level due to the award. "After being diagnosed with the condition, I founded the society to try and create awareness about it, and promote further research. I only think of it as my responsibility as a medicine teacher and doctor," he said.

Shubha Venkatesha Iyengar
A former National Aerospace Laboratory (NAL) scientist who is noted for her contribution in the development of DRISHTI Transmissometer, which is a runway visibility measuring system and Aviation Weather Monitoring System that has been installed in more than 100 locations across the country.

Ms. Shuba joined the NAL in 1974 as a research student and was a scientist in the Material Science Division and Airport Instrument Division. She retired from the NAL in 2020. "It is nice to note that our team's contribution to the country has been recognised. I want to thank my parents for allowing me to pursue my higher education as it was very different at that time for women to pursue higher education but my father encouraged me to do my PhD," Ms. Shuba said.

Anke Gowda
The 75-year-old runs Pustaka Mane (House of Books) in Haralahalli village of Pandavapura taluk in Mandya district that has a collection of more than 20 lakh books. The institution is regarded as one of the country's largest personal libraries, offering free access to readers. A book curator and librarian, Mr. Gowda worked as a bus conductor before joining a sugar factory in Pandavapura as a timekeeper, setting aside a major portion of his salary to buy books.

He not only sold his site in Mysuru, but also invested his retirement funds to procure books for the library.

His collection of books, which he started when he was 20 years old, spans literature, science, technology, mythology and philosophy, and includes rare historical manuscripts dating back to 1832. It also features more than 5,000 dictionaries in multiple languages.

Shashi Shekhar Vempati
Former Prasar Bharati Chief Executive Officer Shashi Shekhar Vempati has been selected for the Padma Shri for his contributions to media. Mr. Vempati took charge as CEO of the Prasar Bharati in June 2017 and completed a full five-year term.

An alumnus of IIT Bombay, he was the youngest person and the first non-civil servant to head Prasar Bharati since the institution was established in 1997.

Prabhakar Basavprabhu Kore
Former chairman of the KLE Society, the 78-year-old educationist has led the KLE Society for over 40 years. The society was running 30 educational institutions in 1985 when he took over. Now, it runs 316 schools, colleges and hospitals with over 18,000 staff and 1.45 lakh students. Its hospitals have over 3,000 beds and provide tertiary specialist treatment to patients in various fields of medicine.

T.T. Jagannathan (Posthumous)
Chairman emeritus of T.T.K. Prestige, Mr. Jagannathan passed away in Bengaluru in 2025, at 77. He led TTK to become a market leader in the small appliances industry in the country. He was instrumental in transforming the company to reach a market cap of over one billion dollars.

He was the longest-serving director/chairman in the company's history.

President's medals conferred on 33 officers from four departments

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Thirty-three officers from Karnataka, belonging to four different departments, have been conferred the President's Medal for Distinguished Service, Meritorious Service, and Gallantry on the occasion of Republic Day.

Two senior police officers and one Home Guards and Civil Defence officer have been awarded the Police Medal for Distinguished Service. Devajyoti Ray, at present serving as Additional Director General of Police, Grievance and Human Rights; Rangappa T., Assistant Commissioner of Police, Ulsoor sub-division in Bengaluru; and Pradeep Kumar Ranswamy, Senior Platoon Commander, Holenarasipura in Hassan district, have been selected for the honour.

Gallantry Medals have been conferred on K.V. Manjunatha, Regional Fire Officer, and firemen Hemanth Kumar D. and Mallikarjuna. The Police Medal for Meritorious Service has been awarded to 20 officers across various ranks. The recipients include Chetan Singh Rathor, Inspector-General of Police (IGP), Northern Range; Amit Singh, IGP, Western Range; Seema Latkar, Commissioner of Police, Mysuru; S. Savita, Deputy IGP, Home Guards, Bengaluru; and M. Puttamadaiah, Deputy IGP and Principal, Police Training College, Kalaburagi.

Other awardees include Nagappa Naveen Kumar, Additional Superintendent of Police, Ballari District-2; Raja Imam Kasim Pinjar, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Crime-2; Chambanil Abraham Simon, Superintendent of Police, DCRE, Mangaluru; and Hanumantharaya, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Bidar. Eleven police officers and seven officers from the Fire and Emergency Services, Home Guards, and Prisons and Correctional Services have also been conferred the Police Medal for Meritorious Service.

All eyes on Governor's address

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Amid the clash between the Lok Bhavan and Congress-led State government over the Governor's address to the joint legislature last week, all eyes are on Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot, who is scheduled to deliver the Republic Day address at Manekshaw Parade Ground here on Monday.

Lok Bhavan sources said that Mr. Gehlot will be participating in the Republic Day function and will receive the Guard of Honour. He will also deliver the speech.

Sources said that the Lok Bhavan had received the speech to be delivered from the Government. Traditionally, the Governor will – in his speech – speak on the Government's achievements and on the constitution. On Thursday, the Government clashed with the Governor, who walked out without delivering the speech provided by the Government over nearly a dozen contents that were critical of the BJP-led Union Government.

Speaking in Mysuru, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said the Governor was free to make changes to the speech provided by the State government while delivering the Republic Day address.

He said the Governor is bound by the Constitution to deliver the speech given to him by the government while addressing the joint session of the State Legislature.

He, however, has the liberty to make changes to the speech to be delivered at the Republic Day celebrations.

Highlighting safety

Bengaluru Traffic Police officers during the Road Safety bike rally organised in connection with the 37th National Road Safety Month at Sree Kanteerava Stadium in Bengaluru on Sunday; (right) participants at the 8th edition of Zydus Pinkathon, organised to promote women's health and create breast cancer awareness. ALLEN EGENUSE J.

KSSA India Open draws global players

Balarama V
BENGALURU

Ten-year-old Nathan Tan from Kuala Lumpur has been playing Scrabble since he was six.

"He won last year's Malaysia National Youth Scrabble Championship. As a parent, I want to encourage him, as it helps him build resilience while he prepares to compete at the World Youth Championships," says Phillip Tan, father of Nathan Tan.

Tan is the youngest player at the KSSA Indian Open 2026, an international Scrabble tournament that commenced in Bengaluru on January, 23.

Hosted by Karnataka State Scrabble Association (KSSA), the four-day tournament will see 168 contestants from 13 countries, and the winners will receive cash prizes totalling ₹11.6 lakh. This year, the contestants include the currently ranked third in the world, Hubert Wee of Singapore, 2017 Scrabble World Champion Akshay Bhandarkar, WESPA (Global governing body of Scrabble) Chairman Lukeman Owolabi, and 16-year-old Bengaluru boy Suyash Manchali, who won the silver medal at the 2024 World Youth Scrabble Championship.

The special Division D on the first day of the tournament was aimed at newbie players, with a strict time limit of 25 minutes per player.

"I have been playing competitive Scrabble for more than 15 years. I enjoy the game because of my love for reading and words. Winning is not easy, but every loss helps me learn from my mistakes and improve in the next game," said Ela Ghose, one of the contestants. Siddharth Nithyanand, Secretary of KSSA, noted that it is the first time the matches of the tournament are being live-streamed.

"On January 25, the last day of the tournament, we will also conduct a mini-Scrabble tournament for beginners, to attract fresh talent into the competitive landscape," he said.

Sunny Bhatia, a top-ranked player from Delhi, hoped for more corporate firms to come forward to sponsor Scrabble tournaments.

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PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT

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On receiving the original documents, the concerned company will verify the claim against their records within 30 days of filing and upload an "E-Verification Report (EVR)" on the MCA portal, indicating either approval or rejection of the claim. Only after the company files are approved by EVR will the claim be processed by IEPFA.

- Claimants shall receive an email notification on approval or rejection of their claim on their registered email ID.

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- IEPFA acknowledges communication from the verified contact details only, provided by claimants while filling IEPF form 5 online.
- Claimants may approach companies and their nodal officers to rectify discrepancies and file new claim SRN.
- IEPF Authority recommends nomination in Securities to ease the process of transmission of securities in case of death of investor.
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Narrating stories of the world's women mathematicians, in portraits

Woman in mathematics often find themselves up against a formidable glass ceiling. This exhibition in Benglauru opens a window into the lives of 20 extraordinary women academics, including one from India, with an aim to create visibility and encourage young women to embrace a career in the subject

Divya Gandhi
BENGALURU

Visitors at the Science Gallery Bengaluru viewing the exhibition 'Women of mathematics from around the world'. SUDHAKARA JAIN

"Solving mathematical problems gave me a unique sensation of freedom that did not depend on what happened around me," confessed Irina Kmit, a Ukrainian mathematician, now a professor in the mathematics department at the Humboldt University in Berlin. Her research topics include hyperbolic differential equations and boundary value problems. And she described maths as a "language without borders."

Professor Kmit is among the 20 women selected for a photographic exhibition titled 'Women of mathematics from around the world', which has travelled 170 countries and is now on show at the Science Gallery Bengaluru. The exhibition of women – from Congo to India – shows each mathematician against a blackboard filled end-to-end with equations.

'Shameful disparity'

For Professor Kmit, she had "not experienced obstacles due to the fact of being a woman". But women in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) in most parts of the world, including India, are up against a formidable glass ceiling in the form of social pressure to start a family or due to institutional apathy.

For instance, according to the Chairman of the University Grants Commission, India, in 2024, had set a world record with a 40% enrolment of women in STEM fields. But soon, they find a sharp attrition and the gender gap widening as they move up the academic ladder a paper published in *Nature in* 2024 found that women made up a mere 16.7% of the STEM faculty in India.

The "Women in math" touring exhibition that started with a show in Berlin in 2016 stems from the observation that even today, "women find it difficult to embrace a career in the mathematical academic world and the disparity between the proportion of men and that of women among professional mathematicians is still shamefully large," a press release read. The women portrayed here could also be "role models" for young women scientists "to trust their own strength".

Neela's journey

The exclusive group of mathematicians chosen for this exhibition includes Neela Nataraj, the institute chair professor at the department of mathematics, IIT Bombay, who is now working on mathematical problems related to liquid crystals. Professor Nataraj said she was "scared of mathematics" as a child. But by high school her proactive teachers boosted her confidence in the subject, which would chart her academic future.

Professor Nataraj belonged to a "very conservative family", where she was expected her to get married and find a stable job. She did marry in the first year of her PhD at the age of 23, and critical to her future academic trajectory was her supportive husband and his and her family and mentors. Her research topics are numerical analysis, finite element methods and applied maths. "Nothing makes me happier than going into a class and teaching students," she added.

But she did "face obstacles," and added: "It totally depends on you whether you choose to view them as challenges to overcome or as difficulties that act as debilitating deterrents. It all depends on how you want to find ways to overcome them and bounce back. It depends on how passionate you are about the mathematics you want to do."

Yukari Ito, a mathematician from the University of Tokyo, began a "women's lunch" where they didn't necessarily discuss mathematics, but the women felt the need to meet "because we had less information than men who had more opportunities to communicate with each other, and had so much more information."

She's "happy when I discover new things," said Professor Ito, who specialises in algebraic geometry and the resolution of singularities. "It's also very interesting to have different ideas than other people." And she is most satisfied when teaching, especially "when I see that change in my students' eyes or expressions, when they understand something."

Men still outnumber women in professional mathematics as women face challenges in the field due to social pressure and institutional apathy

Discoveries as an addiction

Cornelie Mitcha Malanda, from Congo, said maths discoveries makes her feel like "a child ... who saw chocolate for the first time, and ... screamed in joy." The subject is nothing short of "an addiction". Professor Malanda, a faculty member of science and technology at the Marien Ngouabi University, urged young women entering the field of mathematics to "trust" themselves: "Be convinced. Be more confident. You will face challenges, you will be down sometimes, you will cry, that's true. But don't give up."

Jahnavi Phalkey, founding director of Science Gallery, said in a statement that she hoped the exhibition "will encourage young men to recognise women mathematicians as part of the intellectual landscape and for young women to fearlessly think of mathematics as their own, just as the women portrayed in the exhibition have been able to."

The curator, Ms. Paycha, said that women worldwide researching mathematics and theoretical physics "are still scarce." The purpose of the exhibition was "to make visible women of mathematics and theoretical physics from around the world and to encourage young women to embrace a career in mathematics and/or theoretical physics."

'Specific obstacles'

Ms. Matoff said of her decade-long project of portraying female mathematicians worldwide: "Even after 37 such sessions, I am still inspired by the passion with which female mathematicians explain, describe, and paint their theories on the blackboard."

The portraits are presented in collaboration with the Consulate General of the of Germany, the International Centre for Theoretical Sciences, and the Raman Research Institute. The exhibition will be open to the public until March 15.

The organisers expressed hope that presenting mathematics through women mathematicians' perspectives and life stories will make this discipline more tangible and accessible to new entrants. "Entering the field of mathematics can be tough, and women often encounter specific obstacles."

(divya.gandhi@thehindu.co.in)

THE GIST

The photography exhibition 'Women of Mathematics From Around the World', which has travelled 170 countries is now on display at the Science Gallery Bengaluru. It will be open to the public until March 15

The organisers expressed hope that presenting mathematics through women mathematicians' perspectives and life stories will make this discipline more tangible and accessible to new entrants

Though India has set a world record with 40% women's enrolment in STEM fields, a study published by *Nature* in 2024 found that women made up a mere 16.7% of the STEM faculty in India

BIG SHOT

A green and red aurora streams across the earth's horizon above the city lights of Europe across Italy towards Germany on January 19. The International Space Station was orbiting 421 km above the Mediterranean Sea at 10 p.m. local time when the image was captured. NASA

WHAT IS IT?

ExoMiner++: planet spotter

Vasudevan Mukunth

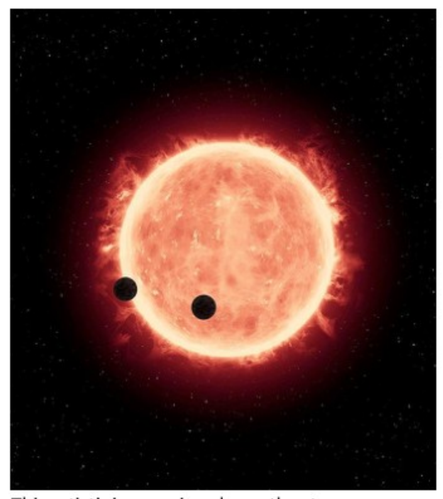
ExoMiner++ is a deep-learning artificial intelligence (AI) model developed by NASA researchers to spot exoplanets in telescope data. It's the successor to ExoMiner, which examined Kepler telescope data. ExoMiner++ will comb through the Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS) mission as well.

ExoMiner++ analyses graphs showing the brightness of a star over time. When a planet crosses in front of its star, it causes a dip in brightness. The challenge is to separate true planetary signals from false positives, such as two stars orbiting each other or background objects that mimic planetary transits.

Unlike many black-box AI models, ExoMiner++ is designed to be explainable. It provides astronomers with a score indicating the likelihood of a signal being a planet and offers insights into why it made that classification.

ExoMiner is credited with validating 370 new exoplanets from Kepler data. These planets were from a shortlist stuck in limbo: scientists had listed them as candidates but their signals were too ambiguous for standard validation techniques.

Compared to ExoMiner, ExoMiner++ is trained on both Kepler and TESS data and can compare a much greater number of stars at a time. As a result, thus far, ExoMiner++ has identified around 7,000 potential exoplanet candidates in TESS data.



This artist's impression shows the star TRAPPIST-1 with two planets transiting across it. NASA, ESA, AND G. BACON (STSCI)

NASA has released ExoMiner++ as open-source software on GitHub and has invited researchers to replicate NASA's results, apply the model to their own datasets, and refine the algorithm for future missions, such as the Nancy Grace Roman Space Telescope.

For feedback and suggestions for 'Science', please write to **science@thehindu.co.in** with the subject 'Daily page'

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Woman found dead in swimming pool at farmhouse

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A 30-year-old woman was found dead under suspicious circumstances in the swimming pool of her family's farmhouse in Kodihalli near Kanakapura in the Bengaluru South district.

Suspicion

The deceased has been identified as Pratibha. Her family has expressed suspicion over the role of her husband in her death.

Case registered

The Kodihalli police have registered a case of unnatural death.

The police sources said that Pratibha's husband, Nanje Gowda, had separated from his first wife a few years ago and subsequently married Pratibha. According to the police, the body was found in the early morning, but they suspected that the death may have occurred during the intervening night of Saturday and Sunday.

A senior police officer told *The Hindu* that the Scene of Crime officers are yet to submit their report and that the body has been sent for post-mortem examination.

"There were no visible injury marks on the body, but since the family has raised suspicion, we will investigate the case. However, we are awaiting the post-mortem report before initiating any action," the officer said.

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Text&Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Candidates who have filed nominations for local body elections

20,718 As many as 20,718 candidates have filed nominations for the upcoming Zilla Parishad and Panchayat Samiti elections in Maharashtra. Elections to 12 Zilla Parishads and 125 Panachayat Samitis in the State will be held on February 5. PTI

Number of people dead in a fire in Karachi, Pakistan

72 The death toll in the fire at a shopping plaza in Pakistan's Karachi climbed to 72 with a dozen people still reported missing a week after the tragic incident. The fire broke out in the basement of the Gul Shopping Plaza and quickly spread to the rest of the building on January 17. PTI

Share of voters mapped with 2003 SIR list in Jharkhand

72 In per cent. Jharkhand Chief Electoral Officer K. Ravi Kumar said that 72% voters have so far been mapped with that of the 2003 electoral rolls during the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) in the State. Mr. Kumar urged electors to participate in building a comprehensive and error-free voter list. PTI

Protesters arrested on suspicion of aggravated trespass

86 Eighty-six people were arrested on suspicion of aggravated trespass after protesters breached the grounds of a London prison in support of a pro-Palestinian hunger striker. The group were "protesting in support of a Palestine Action prisoner on a hunger strike". AFP

Drug offenders arrested in Delhi Police's crackdown

59 Ahead of Republic Day celebrations, the Delhi Police carried out a coordinated crackdown on narcotics smuggling, organised crime and other offences, conducting raids at 2,348 locations across the city and arresting 59 drug offenders. PTI

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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The issues surrounding Governors' address

What do Articles 175 and 176 of the Constitution mandate? How are Governors acting against established constitutional practices when it comes to the yearly address to State legislatures, especially in Opposition-ruled States? What were the recommendations of the Sarkaria and Punchhi Commission?

EXPLAINER

Rangarajan. R

The story so far:
There have been a series of issues in Opposition-ruled States with respect to the address by the Governor to the State legislature at the commencement of the first session of the year. This has raised constitutional and political questions about the Governor's role in State legislature.

What is the history?
Section 63 of the Government of India Act, 1935 (GOI Act) provided that the Governor may in his discretion address the provincial legislature. From April 1937, when provincial autonomy started under the GOI act, the Governor's speech was prepared in consultation with the council of ministers in provinces that laid down the legislative agenda.

Similarly, in the Constituent Assembly, while adopting the Article dealing with Governors' address to State legislature, it was understood that it would reflect the policy of the elected council of ministers and not the Governor's personal views.

What are Constitutional provisions?
Article 175 of the Constitution specifies that the Governor may address the house(s) of the State legislature. This is not a mandatory address and may be rarely used by a ruling government. Article 176, on the other hand, provides that the Governor shall address the house(s) of the State legislature at the commencement of the first session after each general election to the Legislative Assembly and at the commencement of the first session of each year. This is a mandatory address to be prepared by the council of ministers, and delivered by the Governor, outlining the government's achievements in the previous year and its roadmap for policies in the ensuing year. This address is also provided whenever a new assembly is constituted to enable a newly sworn-in council of ministers to outline their policies to the elected representatives and through them to the citizens at large. Article 176 further directs that the rules of procedure of the house(s) shall have provisions for allotment of time for discussion of matters referred in such address. This is the 'Motion of thanks on Governor's address' where the ruling and opposition legislators debate on policy matters announced in the address before voting on the same.

No more protocol: Karnataka Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot at the joint session of the State legislature, at the Vidhana Soudha, in Bengaluru, on January 22. FILE PHOTO

The Supreme Court in *Shamsher Singh versus State of Punjab* (1974) had held that the Governor is only a constitutional head who acts on the advice of the council of ministers. In *Nabam Rebia versus Deputy Speaker* (2016), the Supreme Court reiterated that the address under Article 175 or 176 is to be performed by the Governor on the aid and advice of the council of ministers.

What are the current issues?
The current issues arise because Governors in Opposition-ruled States act against established constitutional practices. In Tamil Nadu, the Governor had skipped some portions of the address prepared by the council of ministers in 2022 and 2023. Subsequently, since 2024, the Governor has failed to address the assembly as required under Article 176. In Kerala, the Governor skipped a few portions of the policy address prepared by the State's cabinet. In Karnataka, the Governor did not read out the address prepared by the council of ministers but instead delivered his own two-line address before leaving the joint session of the legislature.

It is pertinent to note that the Governors take the oath of office under Article 159 that requires them to 'preserve, protect and defend the Constitution and the law.' Such actions go against constitutional principles and the law as settled by the highest court of the country. There have been instances of friction between elected governments and nominated governors since the 1960s with respect to the formal yearly address to the State legislature.

However, current instances are more frequent with Governors altogether skipping the address.

What can be the way forward?
Governors act as the nominal head of the State executive just like the President does for the Union executive. Further, the Governor acts as an appointee of the Centre which may be required for maintaining the unity and integrity of the nation in critical times. Nevertheless, federalism is also a basic feature of our Constitution and the Governor's office should not undermine the powers of popularly elected governments. The underlying issue for conflicts has been the politicisation of the Governor's post. Many political leaders have called for abolition of the post in the past. But considering our quasi-federal constitutional scheme, such demands for abolition are likely to remain only on paper. The reform that can be implemented is the recommendation of the Sarkaria and Punchhi Commission. As per these recommendations, the Constitution may be amended to provide that the Chief Ministers of States shall be consulted before the appointment of Governors. While this may not be a panacea for all issues between Governors and elected governments, it could be a good starting point to minimise discord on important legislative issues and avoid confrontation on customary practices like the annual address.

Rangarajan. R is a former IAS officer and author of 'Courseware on Polity Simplified.' He currently trains at Officers IAS academy. Views expressed are personal.

THE GIST

- Article 176 provides that the Governor shall address the house(s) of the State legislature at the commencement of the first session after each general election to the Legislative Assembly and at the commencement of the first session of each year.
- The current issues arise because Governors in Opposition-ruled States act against established constitutional practices.
- The underlying issue for conflicts has been the politicisation of the Governor's post.

When can courts interfere in an ongoing investigation?

Should the phrase 'coercive measures' be defined more concretely?

R.K. Vij

The story so far:
The Supreme Court recently in *State of U.P. & Anr versus Mohd Arshad Khan & Anr* (December 2025) set aside the Allahabad High Court's order and held that "directing a time-bound investigation must remain the exception rather than the norm". The Court said that High Courts should intervene only "where delay itself begins to cause prejudice". The Court also did not find any justification for granting protection from arrest (or coercive action) without granting the relief actually prayed for – quashing the First Information Report (FIR). Earlier in November 2025, the Delhi High Court in *Satya Prakash Bagla versus State & Ors.* held that the phrase "coercive measures" did not apply to freezing of bank accounts by the police during investigation. It said that the intent of the phrase "coercive measures" was not to restrain further investigation by the police, but was used in the context of only the petitioner's personal liberty.

When can courts interfere?
A three-judge Bench of the Supreme Court in *Neeharika Infrastructure (P) Ltd. versus State of Maharashtra* (2021) discussed the scope of the High Court's powers to quash an investigation or pass interim orders staying an investigation. The Supreme Court said that the police have the statutory right and duty under the relevant provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) to investigate into a cognisable offence. The courts should not thwart any investigation into such offences. It is only in cases where no cognisable offence, or offence of any kind, is disclosed in the FIR, that the Court can stop an investigation. Thus, the power of quashing should be exercised sparingly with circumspection. Courts are barred from usurping the jurisdiction of the police, since the two organs of the state operate in two specific spheres of activity and one must not tread over the other, save in exceptional cases where non-interference would result in a miscarriage of justice.

What about using the phrase 'coercive measures'?
The Supreme Court in *Neeharika Infrastructure (supra)* observed that the High Courts had passed interim orders to stay arrest and said that "no coercive steps [should] be taken against the accused" without assigning any reasons. The Supreme Court held that the High Court is not justified in passing such orders either during the investigation or till the investigation is completed. It also dismissed the quashing of the petition under Section 482 CrPC (Section 528 BNSS) and Article 226 of the Constitution.

Whenever an interim order is passed by the High Court of "no coercive steps to be adopted", the High Court must clarify what it means by that phrase as the term is too vague and broad, and can be easily misunderstood or misapplied. Therefore, while passing a 'no coercive steps' order, if the High Court intends to stay the investigation, it must specifically state so and must assign reasons thereof. Such reasons, however brief, must disclose an application of mind.

However, the Delhi High Court in *Satya Prakash Bagla (supra)* said that the expressions 'coercive measure' and 'coercive steps' derive their meaning, import and significance from the context and the nature of the proceedings in which they are used. To ascertain the court's intention in employing these expressions in a given order, it is necessary to examine the nature of the relief or protection that was sought, and what the court intended to grant to a party at the relevant stage of the proceedings. It would, therefore, be neither appropriate nor judicious for a court to attribute to these expressions any inflexible, or predetermined meaning. The High Court clarified that the mere articulation of the phrases 'no coercive measure' or 'no coercive steps' with reference to a person cannot be construed as necessarily implying a stay or suspension of any ongoing investigation against that person.

R.K. Vij is a former IPS officer.

THE GIST

- A three-judge Bench of the Supreme Court in *Neeharika Infrastructure (P) Ltd. versus State of Maharashtra* (2021) discussed the scope of the High Court's powers to quash an investigation or pass interim orders staying an investigation.
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REPUBLIC DAY SPECIAL

A SPACE MARKETING FEATURE

77th Republic Day 2026: India Showcases 'Vande Mataram' Spirit and Self-Reliance

Republic Day is one of the most important national festivals of India. It is celebrated every year on 26 January with great pride and enthusiasm across the country. "As we enter our 77th year as a Republic, we renew our commitment to justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity."

On this historic day, India became a sovereign, democratic republic, and the Constitution replaced the Government of India Act, 1935. The Constitution lays down the principles of justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity, which form the foundation of our nation. Republic Day reminds citizens of their rights and duties and strengthens faith in democratic values.

The main Republic Day celebration is held at Kartavya Path in New Delhi. The President of India unfurls the national flag and takes the salute at the grand parade. The parade showcases India's military strength, cultural diversity, and national unity through marching contingents, state tableaux, and an impressive air force flypast. It reflects the spirit of "Unity in Diversity."

Across the country, Republic Day is celebrated in schools, colleges, and public institutions with flag unfurling, cultural programs, patriotic songs, and speeches. People remember the freedom fighters and leaders who contributed to the making of the Constitution and the nation.

Republic Day 2026 is a reminder that the strength of India lies in its Constitution and its people. It inspires citizens to uphold democratic ideals and work together for a strong, united, and progressive India. Jai Hind.

Building homes that feel personal in a mass-market world

With LivingWalls, Abhinav is bringing a design-led, hyperlocal approach to real estate—shaped by a 40-year legacy of infrastructure execution and a belief that homes must evolve with the people living in them.

For most families, the first interaction with a builder is transactional—square feet, price points, timelines. But for Abhinav, the point of real estate was never just to "build and sell." It was to build something that feels lived-in from day one.

LivingWalls, the Bengaluru-based real estate brand under VDB Infra & Realty, was born from a shift in mindset. After decades of working in infrastructure—where the impact is felt by thousands but rarely traced back to the people who built it—the move into real estate was a decision to create a direct relationship with customers.

"We've been in infrastructure for over 40 years," Abhinav says. "Real estate was the natural next step for us—because we already understood execution. And with the land banks we had, it made sense to start building our own projects and build a brand in the process."

Why LivingWalls refuses to build "copy-paste" homes

LivingWalls is built around one idea: shrinking the gap between standardised housing and personalised living. "At scale, personalisation is hard," Abhinav admits. "But we keep pushing ourselves to make homes more adaptable—more suited to a customer's lifestyle—without losing construction efficiency."

That design-led intent runs through its portfolio—from Olde Town and Hush Fields in Bengaluru to In The Hills in Chikmagalur.

True North's bold bet: homes that can evolve with your life

A strong example of that thinking is LivingWalls True North, where the brand moves beyond the usual 2BHK/3BHK labels and focuses on real living formats. "We didn't want people to look at it like a fixed formula," Abhinav explains. "So we started thinking in terms of sizes—Medium, Large, XL, Double XL, Triple XL—because that's how customers actually experience a home."

True North is designed with flexibility built in—allowing residents to reconfigure layouts as their lives change. "Most builders are thinking only about building and selling," he says. "We're thinking about how the customer will use the product in the future."

— Abhinav, Managing Director, LivingWalls

Republic day reminds us of the glorious freedom movement followed by the establishment of a self-governed nation with the adoption of the world's largest written Constitution. On this sacred day we resolve to build our nation with unity and integrity. We realise that duties and rights go hand in hand in shaping our Republic.
We are proud to be the largest democracy in the world. Let us celebrate this day with our heads held high.

Dr Wooday P Krishna
Educationist

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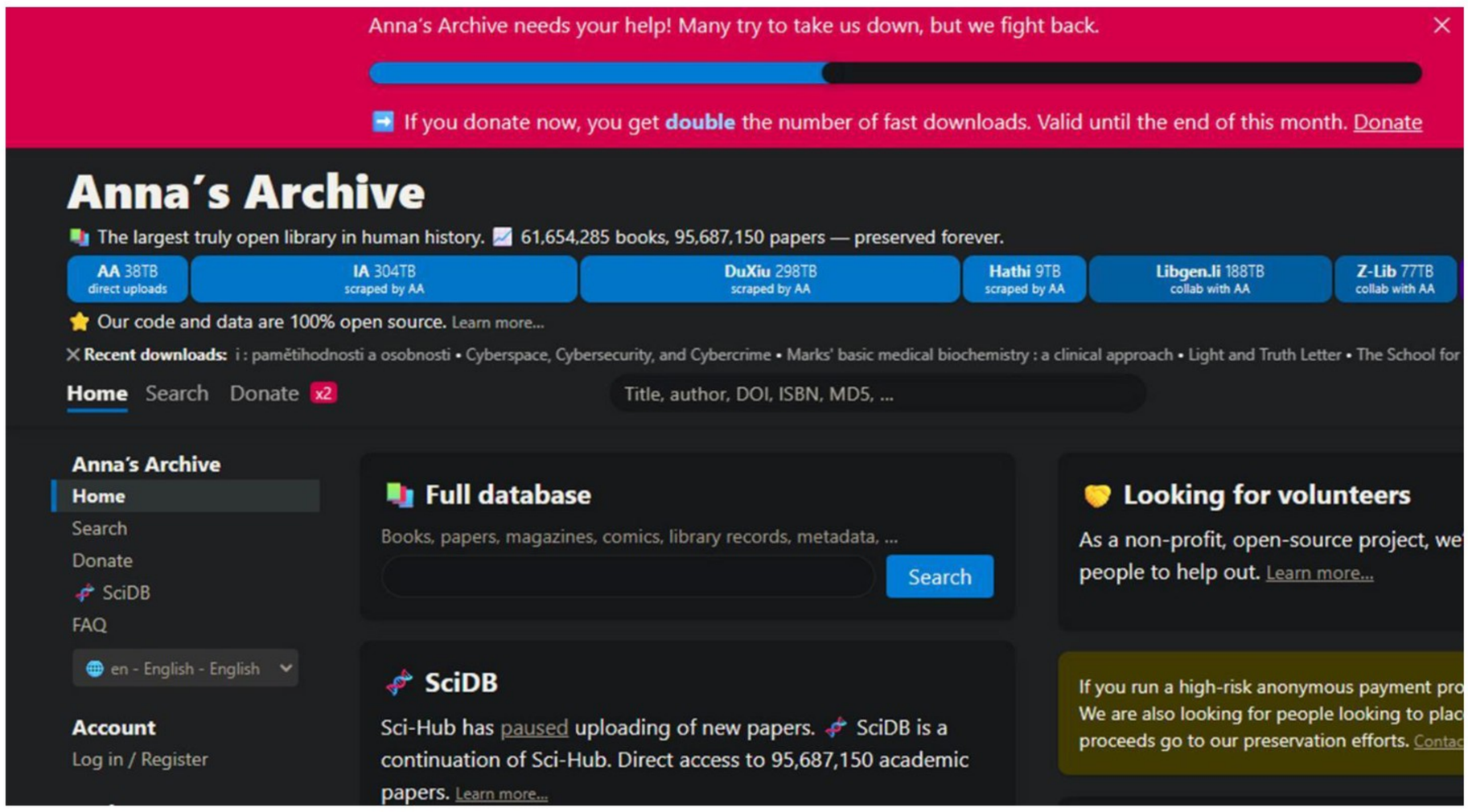

The landing page of Anna's Archive. THEHINDU

What the Anna's Archive Spotify hack reveals about digital piracy

Anna's Archive, which enables digital piracy through its search engine project, made headlines in late 2025 after scraping Spotify. The main web link to access Anna's Archive is down globally which has now left numerous users in distress

Sahana Venugopal

The story so far:

In late December, a relatively little-known platform, Anna's Archive, made global headlines after it hacked Spotify. Tracked closely by open source movement advocates, the database that indexes millions of digital books and journals claimed it had scraped from Spotify about 86 million music files and metadata coming to slightly under 300TB. The platform claimed it "saw a role for us here to build a music archive primarily aimed at preservation." While the music collection is yet to be made fully available, the main web link to access Anna's Archive is down globally. This sudden outage has left numerous users – academics, bibliophiles, and open source activists – in distress.

What is Anna's Archive?

Anna's Archive is a type of shadow library project that unifies existing libraries – both legal and illegal. It does this by collaborating with volunteers, scraping web content, and setting up mirrors to preserve digital records. When a user accesses Anna's Archive, they can see a variety of fast and slow download links from the platform's partner servers. Those who contribute certain amounts can get a higher number of faster downloads per day. In essence, Anna's Archive is a search engine for the contents of different shadow libraries.

Anna's Archive claims that it has preserved about 16% of the world's books, including scientific journals, since its inception in 2022. The real identity of the person or group behind the project is unknown. But the group has cited Aaron Swartz, a U.S. technologist and digital activist, as one of its inspirations. The group considers itself a non-profit and claims that all donations are spent on servers, storage, and bandwidth.

About its site being taken down and the scraping of Spotify data, the group posted on Reddit: "This unfortunately happens to shadow libraries on a regular basis. We don't believe this has to do with our Spotify backup." While many expressed support for the database, others criticised the project for drawing attention to its illegal activities by targeting a high-profile company like Spotify.

Is Anna's Archive an illegal platform?

Yes. But Anna's Archive claims that its mission is "backing up all knowledge and culture of humanity" and making it available to anyone. To fulfil its mission, the database breaks copyright laws and violates licensing permissions so users can download e-books and other digital files for free. When a reader finds free books through Anna's Archive rather than going through a bookseller or a library, publishers lose out on their revenue while authors, artists, and other creatives lose out on royalties.

Anna's Archive has made contradictory claims regarding the legality of its project. In an introductory blog post published in November 2022, the author noted: "We deliberately violate the copyright law in most countries. This allows us to do something that legal entities cannot do: making sure books are mirrored far and wide". On the other hand, the website claimed that it does not host any copyrighted materials, and only indexes publicly available metadata as a search engine. Furthermore, Anna's Archive has shared that its code and data are fully open source. The platform offers its dataset that includes unreleased collections for archival and LLM training purposes. Anna's Archive offered enterprise-level access "for donations in the range of tens of thousands USD," or in exchange for high-quality collections it doesn't have yet. This means that companies building AI chatbots could use Anna's Archive to train their products on millions of works of art, science, and literature, without fairly compensating the creators.

This month, a U.S. judge ordered Anna's Archive to delete its data from WorldCat, a global catalog of library materials. Anna's Archive in a 2023 blog post claimed it had "meticulously scraped all WorldCat records," by exploiting a flawed website upgrade to obtain a comprehensive to-do list of all the remaining books to be added to Anna's Archive. The legal order is also meant to stop Anna's Archive from scraping, harvesting, using, storing, or sharing WorldCat's data. However, this is unlikely to deter the group, which gleefully thanked WorldCat for hundreds of millions of records and the metadata of 30,000 libraries.

What is the current status?

Anna's Archive is currently unreachable through its annas-archive.org address, even when attempting to access it via a TOR browser. Some people are using alternative web addresses in order to access the database while others are waiting for the platform to come back online through the old address. Anna's Archive as well as community members have provided tips and technical advice for those who wish to access the platform through other links. However, there is the risk of less experienced users being scammed by fake web addresses. Anna's Archive has alleged that the annas-archive.su address, for example, is fraudulent and steals users' donations.

In spite of the takedown, downloads appear to be continuing. On January 19, Anna's Archive shared on its website that based on downloads in the last 30 days, the hourly average was 37,000 and the daily average was 8,83,000. There was a sharp dip in downloads after the .org web address went down, followed by a gradual recovery. The platform also provides downloads stats for individual books.

Multiple Anna's Archive users and donors on Reddit justified their downloads by citing the prohibitive cost of buying books. Others spoke about the lack of libraries in their country, high import fees for foreign books, the need for educational resources, the inability to get new books during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, getting digital versions of physical books they already had, upskilling for career reasons, working on their hobbies, inculcating a reading habit instead of scrolling online, reading more diversely, or not wanting to use the restrictive e-book formats provided by the original publishers.

"[G]od bless, being from 3rd world country where can i get all [this] valuable knowledge. however we have to come to a common ground and see how to compensate authors[.] the knowledge that i got from books has made people retain jobs and support families," shared a user on Reddit this month, in response to Anna's Archive.

THE DAILY QUIZ

Please send in your answers to dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in

Since 1950, India has hosted a head of State or an official from another country as a chief guest/guest of honour for Republic Day. A quiz on such invitees over the years

V.V. Ramanan

QUESTION 1
This year's parade will have two official guests in Antonio Costa and Ursula von der Leyen. When was the last time there was more than one guest?

QUESTION 2
In 1956, who became the first non-Asian guest invited for the Republic Day celebrations?

QUESTION 3
Sir Malik Ghulam Muhammad and Rana Abdul Hamid have been the two guests from Pakistan. Can you tell in which years?

QUESTION 4
Three members (grandfather, son and grandson) of the same family have had the honour of being guests at the Republic Day parade with the father being invited twice. Name them and the country.

QUESTION 5
Who is the only U.S. President to have been given the honour and in which year?

QUESTION 6
In 1961, who became the first woman to be invited as the Chief Guest?

Visual question:
Name this European leader who has been invited twice as the chief guest. REUTERS

Questions and Answers to the January 23 edition of the daily quiz:
1. These many countries participated in the first version of the African Cup of Nations in 1957. This is the current number of slots. **Ans: 3; 24**
2. This country was initially slated to host this year's tournament. **Ans: Guinea**
3. Name the most successful nation in the tournament. **Ans: Egypt; It has won 7 times**
4. This animal is the mascot of this year's tournament. **Ans: Lion. It's called Assad**
5. Name the countries that have qualified for the coming World Cup, but did not play in the AFCON. **Ans: Ghana, Cape Verde**
Visual: Name this Moroccan player. **Ans: Brahim Diaz**
Early Birds: K.N. Viswanathan| Piyali Tuli| Sudhir Thapa| Arun Kumar Singh| Tamal Biswas

KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

He keeps betting on the wrong horse

Why don't you crack open a book once in a while instead of always playing video games?

S. Upendran

"Come on in! What took you so long? I think I heard you talking to my neighbour some twenty minutes ago."

"Make that thirty minutes ago! You know how your neighbour is! He just loves to talk."

"I think everyone in this building knows that – which is why a lot of people avoid him. Anyway, what did he want to talk about?"

"He wanted to know what he could do to get his six-year-old grandson interested in studies."

"That's funny! I'm sure my neighbour would find it funny too, if he ever came to know that you seldom cracked your books when you were in school."

"Cracked my books? What are you talking about? How can someone crack a book? You know books don't crack."

"The expressions 'crack a book' and 'crack open a book' are used in informal contexts in American English. When someone tells you to 'crack a book' what they'd like you to do is to start studying."

"You may have an exam or a test coming up. So, the person wants you to open the book and study."

"Very good! Here's an example. When I was in school, I used to crack a book the day before an exam."

"In my case, I hardly ever cracked open a book. How does that sound?"

"That's a good example. The expression can also be used to mean 'to read a book'. Anju has so many novels, but she has never cracked open any of them."

"My father used to crack a book as soon as he boarded a train."

"Today, when kids board the train, instead of cracking open a book, they watch a movie on their cell phone. And many of them do so without using earphones!"

"That's true! I find that irritating. Have you been watching the Australian Open?"

"I have. For a change, some of the first-round matches were exciting as well."

"I know! Who do you think will win this year's tournament?"

"Please don't ask me to predict. For the past two or three years, I've been backing the wrong horse. Last year, for example..."

"You backed the wrong horse? What are you talking about? I asked you to..."

"When you say that you backed the wrong horse, what you mean is that you supported the wrong individual. The person you supported ends up losing."

"In other words, when you back the wrong horse, you make a wrong decision."

"I guess you could say that! It is also possible to say, 'to bet on the wrong horse'. I think you should listen to your father. He has a very good track record. He seldom bets on the wrong horse."

upendrankye@gmail.com

Word of the day

Dearth:
an acute insufficiency; an insufficient quantity or number

Synonyms: famine, shortage, paucity

Usage: *The dearth of homes on the market has propped up prices.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/dearthpro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /dɜːθ/

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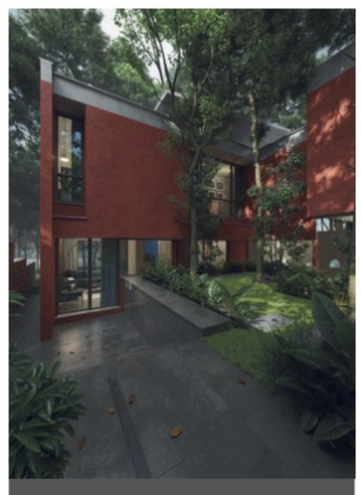

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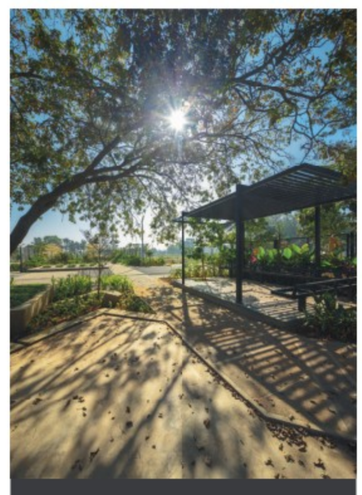

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M BG-BGE

Election Commission signals nationwide SIR

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Defending the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls amid ongoing controversy, Gyanesh Kumar, the Chief Election Commissioner of India, said the exercise had been "completely successful", citing Bihar as its most definitive example.

In a video message delivered during the 16th National Voters' Day event in Bengaluru organised by the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), Karnataka, he said the SIR had ensured that every eligible elector was included in the rolls while eliminating inaccuracies.

The event was attended by Karnataka Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot, Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) Chief Commissioner M. Maheshwar Rao and CEO, Karnataka, V. Anbukkumar.

Across States

The Chief Election Commissioner said the SIR had already been completed in Bihar and was currently under way in 12 States and Union Territories, adding that it would be rolled out across all States. Pointing out to Bihar, he said no application had been filed against the final electoral roll there, which, according to him, established its sanctity and credibility.

Following the Election Commission of India's remarks that the SIR of electoral rolls would be implemented across the country, Mr. Anbukkumar, when asked whether the exercise would be undertaken in the State, said, "We will see."

Exercise franchise

Mr. Gehlot, during his address, called upon voters to exercise their franchise without fear, pressure or inducement. Calling voting both a right and a duty, the Governor likened participation in elections to a sacrifice made for the republic.

"When we vote, we do not merely elect a government, but strengthen public policy, the country's development direction, the future of coming generations and the idea of social justice. Every vote strengthens the foundation of democracy," he said. The Governor also requested newly registered voters to understand democratic values and act as responsible citizens.

During the programme, the Governor presented State-level awards to election officials for excellence in electoral management, including five District Election Officers, 10 Booth Level Officer (BLO) Supervisors and 34 BLOs, alongside others.

ED files prosecution complaint against Winzo and its directors

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Directorate of Enforcement (ED) on Sunday said that it has filed a prosecution complaint against online real money gaming platform Winzo Pvt. Ltd., its directors, and associated subsidiaries under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002.

The complaint was filed on January 23, before the Special Court for PMLA cases (CCH-1), Bengaluru. Winzo Pvt. Ltd. has been named as the prime accused along with its directors, Paavan Nanda and Saumya Singh Rathore. The ED has also arraigned the subsidiaries owned by the company, including Winzo US Inc. (USA), Winzo SG Pte. Ltd. (Singapore), and ZO Pvt. Ltd.

The investigation was initiated based on multiple FIRs registered by the Bengaluru CEN Police and police authorities in Rajasthan, New Delhi, and Gurugram, alleging offences of cheating under the Indian Penal Code.

In a statement, the ED said that it conducted search and seizure operations on November 18, 2025, and December 30, 2025, on the Winzo's office premises, the residences of its directors, and the office of its accounting firm. These searches reportedly led to the seizure of incriminating documents and electronic records and the freezing of movable assets, including bank balances, payment gateway funds, mutual funds, bonds, fixed deposits, and cryptocurrency wallets, valued at approximately ₹690 crore.

The ED said Winzo operated a real money gaming (RMG) platform offering over 100 games and claimed a user base of around 25 crore, largely from tier-3 and tier-4 cities.

Amid uncertainty over SIR verification, over 9,400 Bengal migrant workers leave city

Most families say that on such a short notice, they were left with little time to arrange funds, forcing many to take advance money from employers for their travel

Rishita Khanna
BENGALURU

More than 9,400 migrant workers from West Bengal living in Bengaluru have returned to their hometowns after receiving the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) notices, according to the Karnataka Bengali Kalyan Samiti, formed by and for West Bengal-based workers in Bengaluru.

Most of the families working in the city, majorly from Nadia and Murshidabad, said that the short timelines mentioned in the notices left little time to arrange funds, forcing many to rely on advances from employers to travel back. Several said the disruption was not limited to travel alone, as leaving from work also meant temporary loss of work and in turn wages, as there was no clarity on when or how the verification process would conclude.

Procedural pressure

The families told *The Hindu* that they had started to receive notices after January 14. "Our employers told us that if we do not return to our home districts and appear for verification, our entries will be marked as unresolved during the SIR process," said Binek Pandit, who works at a barber shop, adding that they were told that in such cases, if doubts flagged against names remain uncleared at the revision stage, the entries would not automatically be carried forward to the draft electoral rolls.

Many people say that notices were mainly issued to men, the heads of households and primary earners, even when entire families migrated and reside together.
PHOTO FOR REPRESENTATION PURPOSE ONLY

> In some constituencies in West Bengal, local political representatives helped migrant workers return by arranging flight tickets for them
>
> **RESHMA BANU**
> Domestic worker in R.R. Nagar

Many people said that notices were mainly issued to men, the heads of households and primary earners, even when entire families migrated and reside together. The workers said discrepancies cited included address continuity, absence from older rolls, or linkage gaps, which they argue disproportionately surface in the records of working-age men who migrate seasonally or long-term. Reshma Banu, a domestic worker in R.R. Nagar, said that in some constituencies in West Bengal, local political representatives helped migrant workers return by arranging flight tickets for those who had received SIR notices.

In her case, she said, her flight from Bengaluru to Kolkata was booked with the help of a local politician, after which she travelled onward to Nadia by train. She added that this made it possible for many workers to go for the verification process despite the short notice.

Drawing a comparison with 2019, Ms. Banu said that during the CAA and NRC protests, many migrant workers had also returned to their villages, but often without informing their employers and for many months, before eventually returning to Bengaluru for work. This time, she noted, workers informed their employers before leaving. For Saheb Ali Sheikh, a cook from West Bengal's Nadia district working in Kundalahalli, the notice was issued only to him and his brother, even though nine members of his family live in Bengaluru. Mr. Sheikh said the family had moved to the city nearly five years ago as part of a group of around 100 people and had been working continuously since then. He said that though he had all the required documents, he was given time until January 26 to respond. Unable to arrange travel and finances at such short notice, Mr. Sheikh said he managed to reach Nadia only by January 25, a day before the deadline. He and his brother took an advance from their employer to cover travel costs, flying to Kolkata and travelling onward by road to Nadia.

A similar uncertainty followed Sahreef Ul Sheik, who owns and runs a garage in Balagere and received his SIR notice on January 14. He said he submitted all documents, including his passport, during verification, but was told that inclusion of his name would depend on record consistency, as his father's name does not appear in the 2002 voter list, though his grandfather's name is present. Mr. Sheik travelled by train from Bengaluru to Howrah and then to Nadia by bus, a journey that took over 36 hours.

One-way rule violation: Over 12,000 cases booked in 4 days

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Bengaluru Traffic Police (BTP) booked 12,207 one-way rule violation cases over four days during a special enforcement drive.

According to the data, the highest number of cases was booked in the East Division with 3,140 cases, followed by the North Division (2,955), South Division (2,904), and West Division (2,308).

The BTP launched the drive after last year's ASTraM data revealed an increase in one-way rule violations, with several videos also circulating on social media, prompting calls for police action.

A senior police officer said that unless regular special drives were conducted and enforcement was tightened, such violations would continue to rise. "Therefore, a special drive was launched," the officer said.

The police are planning to extend the special drive to helmetless riding and traffic violations that are witnessed frequently in the city. Further, the BTP is preparing to restart towing operations. Three divisions have already received towing vehicles, and one more division is expected to receive them soon.

Most congested cities

The senior officer added that the BTP would also hold another meeting with companies located along the Outer Ring Road in the East Division to discuss the implementation of several measures. This move follows the city being ranked second among the most congested cities in the world, according to the TomTom Traffic Index.

Puneeth Kerehalli booked for spreading false information against DG&IGP Saleem

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

In yet another case, the cybercrime police have booked cow vigilante and right wing activist Puneeth Kerehalli and his accomplices for allegedly spreading false information against Director-General and Inspector-General of Police (DG&IGP) M.A. Saleem.

Trafficking

The case pertains to an incident in which Kerehalli and his accomplices allegedly visited a settlement near Swetha Farm in Kemapapura, close to Soladevanahalli in north Bengaluru, and claimed that Bangladeshi nationals had taken shelter there. According to the FIR, Kerehalli and his group alleged that Bangladeshi people had been trafficked and brought to the location, which belonged to one Sakina Tasmeen.

The group further claimed that the property was a 'benami' holding of Mr. Saleem.

Social unrest

"The group went live on social media and falsely stated that Bangladeshi Muslims had taken shelter in Bengaluru. The claims made by the group are provocative in nature and could create social and communal unrest," the complainant stated. The incident came to light when the social media monitoring cell of the Bengaluru City Police came across the video on Facebook and other social media platforms on January 23. Subsequently, a police officer filed a complaint at the City Cybercrime Police Station.

The police have invoked relevant sections of the IT Act and the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

A senior police officer said that the investigation is ongoing. This is the third such case against Kerehalli in the last ten days. Earlier, Kerhalli had 13 cases against him in the city, according to the BCP.

From Page One

KSRTC plans new Flybus fleet for KIA

However, the trials revealed a key operational challenge. "The Airavat 2.0 buses are slightly taller at the rear, which created issues while entering the underground bus bay at Terminal 2 of the airport, where KSRTC and BMTC airport buses are stationed," the source said.

Due to this constraint, KSRTC is now exploring alternative bus models that meet the height restrictions of the Terminal 2 bus bay.

"Since these buses could not enter the multilevel parking facility, we are planning to procure buses that are not taller at the rear and can easily access the Terminal 2 bay. At present, we are not sure about the type or manufacturer, but there is a clear plan to introduce a new Flybus fleet," the source added.

Premium airport commute option

The Flybus service is positioned as a premium airport commute option, featuring high-tech interiors, reclining seats, GPS connectivity and onboard bio-toilets.

In November 2025, KSRTC also began offering complimentary light snack kits with Nandini products to Flybus passengers to enhance comfort.

Earlier, passengers had complained about odours from the onboard toilets. The officials said the issue was addressed by installing extinguishers, which significantly reduced the problem. "If new buses are introduced, toilet design and maintenance will be carefully evaluated to ensure such issues do not recur," an official said.

KSRTC officials said that while the proposal was still under way, upgrading the Flybus fleet remained a priority to maintain service quality on the crucial airport route from various parts of the State.

'City corporation polls will be held by April'

The Hindu Bureau
MANGALURU

The Urban Development and Town Planning Minister Byrathi Suresh said here on Sunday that elections for the Mangaluru City Corporation (MCC) and for the five other city corporations in the State will be held by April 2026. Speaking at the inauguration of the Mahakalipadpu railway underpass, Mr. Suresh said the MCC and the five other city corporations have not had elected bodies for the past several months. "The government wants to hold elections by April. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah is also keen on holding the polls. In another three months, the elections will be held," he said.

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E-tenders are invited from Supplier/Manufacturers/Dealers for the supply of Grocery & Other material for our Prasadalya, Ladu Nirmiti, Canteen & Temple Department for the year 2026-27.
E-Tender Information, Criteria and terms- conditions are available on Sansthan's website www.sai.org.in
The E-Tender is available for Downloading & Uploading from 27/01/2026 11.00 AM to 14 /02/2026 up to 5 PM. on Government website www.mahatenders.gov.in

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Goraksha Gadilkar, I.A.S
Chief Executive Officer.

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For and on behalf of the President of India, The Deputy Chief Electrical Engineer / General / Construction / Southern Railway / Egmore, Chennai 600008 invites E-Tender for the following Work.

Name of work: Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), Construction, Chennai Egmore office Complex: Electrical arrangements for the proposed CAO/CN/MS chamber / Conference Hall, Chamber of Secretary to CAO/CN, CAO/RSP, CE/East at third floor and for residual civil modification works at Ground floor, First floor, Second floor and Sixth floor.

Tender Notice No. and Date		E-HQ-CN-MS-EOT-12-2025-26 dt.22/01/2026
1.	Period of Completion	3 Months.
2.	Approximate Cost of Work	Rs.26,33,758/-
3.	Cost of Tender form	Nil
4.	Earnest Money Deposit (EMD)	Rs.52,700/-
5.	Tender Closing Date & Time	16/02/2026 at 11.00AM.
6.	Tender Opening Date & Time	16/02/2026 at 11.30AM.

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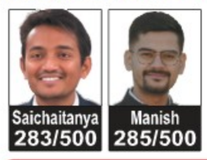
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PUBLIC NOTICE
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C.M.ARUMUGAM
K.SELVAKUMAR
P.MAHARANATH
Advocates,
Madurai,Tamilnadu.

Wellness centre

The Hindu Bureau
MYSURU

The All India Institute of Speech and Hearing, Mysuru, has set up a dedicated wellness centre on its campus to provide comprehensive mental health care and support services for students and staff.

Timings
BENGALURU

MONDAY, JAN. 26	
RISE 06:46	SET 18:18
RISE 11:54	SET 00:00
TUESDAY, JAN. 27	
RISE 06:46	SET 18:18
RISE 12:43	SET 00:58
WEDNESDAY, JAN. 28	
RISE 06:46	SET 18:19
RISE 13:39	SET 02:01

Bengaluru Weather	max	min
Tumakuru	30	20
Mysuru	30	14
Bengaluru	25	19

Bengaluru Today
26°C The weather will be mostly dry. Day will be comfortable. Night will be cool and hazy.

Bengaluru Tomorrow
27°C Morning will be cool with mist and haze. Day will be slight warm. Night also will be cool.

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THE HINDU
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Recognise space sector as critical infrastructure, Indian Space Assn. says in its Budget wish list

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Recognising the space sector as critical infrastructure, demand creation through a 50% government procurement mandate, financial and tax incentives are among the recommendations for the space sector in the upcoming Union Budget by the Indian Space Association (ISpA).

"India's space sector is entering a decisive growth phase yet remains structurally disadvantaged in access to finance due to its capital-intensive nature and long gestation cycles of five to seven years. While global peers classify space assets as strategic or critical infrastructure, India's space ecosystem currently lacks formal infrastructure status, limiting access to long-term, low-cost capital. Recognising space infrastructure as a distinct infrastructure subsector is essential to unlock scale, private investment, and global competitiveness," the ISpA said on the need to recognise space sector as critical infrastructure.

It also recommended that at least 50% of all government procurement for space-based services, hardware, and missions be sourced from the Indian private entities (NGEs). The ISpA said that all Ministries, State governments, and urban local bodies to procure satellite imagery and geospatial data only from empanelled Indian companies.

The Indian Space Association has recommended that at least 50% of all government procurement for space-based services, hardware, and missions be sourced from the Indian private entities.
K. MURALI KUMAR

It asks all Ministers, State govts. and urban local bodies to procure satellite imagery and geospatial data only from empanelled Indian companies

Domestic industry
"With growing use of satellite-derived data in governance and commercial applications, standardisation and security are critical. A structured procurement and access framework will support domestic industry while safeguarding national interests," the association said.

On the financial and tax incentives for the sector, it has recommended the need to introduce Production Linked Incentive schemes for satellites, launch vehicles, space-grade components, and critical subsystems, provision for five-year tax holiday for space manufacturing, launch services, and space-based service providers.

"Enable R&D tax credits of 20% to 30% for qualifying space-sector R&D, introduce capital investment tax credits for launch pads, ground stations, and satellite production plants, allow accelerated depreciation on satellites, rockets, and launch-related hardware," the ISpA said.

SEZs and exports
The Special Economic Zones and export enablement, interest subvention for space infrastructure and R&D, incentives to promote R&D and employment, GST rationalisation and input tax credit reform, international collaboration, exports, and FDI rationalisation, legal and regulatory certainty are the other recommendations by the ISpA.

Survey report recommends 1% reservation in private sector for gender minorities

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The 2025-26 baseline survey on gender minorities in Karnataka has recommended 1% reservation in private sector jobs for people from gender minorities in the State.

"It is important that not only the government but also private companies provide employment opportunities to gender minorities," read the report that was submitted to the State government on Saturday.

First of its kind
The government currently provides 1% horizontal reservation for transgender persons in all government services.

The first of its kind exercise in India, conducted by the Department of Women and Child Development and the Karnataka State Women's Development Corporation, has recorded 10,365 gender minority individuals in the State.

Violence
One of the recommendations in the report includes the establishment of a gender minority welfare board.

The survey found that some forms of violence and discrimination against gender minorities in around 40% schools and colleges. According to the report, 25% adults and 46% children from the community have requested financial assistance for education.

According to the report, 25% adults and 46% children from the community have requested financial assistance for education

Around 40% are not accepted by family members. It was also found that 90% of the community members faced instances of violence,discrimination, or humiliation at hospitals.

The report, therefore, recommends financial assistance, enrollment in hostels on priority, coaching for competitive exams and scholarship schemes for the education of individuals from gender minorities, distribution of Ayushman Bharat cards for all community members and schemes for gender affirmation surgery.

Housing facilities
Noting that 15% of community members live with their parents, 17% in separate houses, and a large number of them on the streets, the report suggested providing housing facilities for them.

Other recommendations include separate toilets and waiting rooms in public places, rehabilitation initiatives, special camps for distribution of ration cards, and awareness programmes for the public, families and officials to prevent violence and discrimination that individuals from gender minorities face.

Top districts
The 45-day long survey of gender minorities across 31 districts identified 10,250 individuals above the age of 18 and 115 children. Most number of individuals were recorded in Vijayapura (1,428), Chickballapur (1,252), Bengaluru Urban (757), Kolar (638), and Belagavi (618).

As per the survey, 3,497 community members belonged to Scheduled Castes and 1,369 belonged to Scheduled Tribes.

The 2011 Census had recorded 34,283 gender minorities in the State. Prior to the 2023 election, the Chief Electoral Officer estimated that 42,756 transgender individuals in the State were eligible to vote.

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Karnataka police join Goa and Maharashtra in search for missing cash

They are working on the theft of two container lorries on the Karnataka-Goa border on October 25; Maharashtra SIT says investigators had arrested five persons and are looking for two more

The Hindu Bureau
BELAGAVI

The Belagavi police on Sunday joined their Goa and Maharashtra counterparts probing the ₹400 crore demonetised cash heist at Chorla Ghat located at the intersection of the three States. The Belagavi police will be joining in the search for missing lorries containing high-value currency notes.

According to a complaint, the two lorries that were waylaid contained between ₹400 crore and ₹1,000 crore. FILE PHOTO

A Special Investigation Team (SIT), constituted by Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, had earlier arrested five suspects, including an alleged hawala operator. The SIT led by Aditya Mirkhelkar, Superintendent of Police, has written to officers in Karnataka and Goa to cooperate with its team members. Belagavi Superintendent of Police K. Ramarajan deputed a team of the Belagavi police who arrived in Nashik on Sunday.

Meanwhile, speaking in Bengaluru, Home Minister G. Parameshwara said that the Karnataka government had sought additional information on the heist to be able to help in the probe.

This follows a case filed in the Nashik police station. Based on a complaint by a Maharashtra-based businessman, Sandip Datta Patil, officers from the Nashik police station have registered a case of the theft of two container lorries containing notes.

According to the complaint, miscreants from Mumbai waylaid two lorries containing between ₹400 crore and ₹1,000 crore in the Chorla Ghat jungles, on the Karnataka-Goa border. The alleged offence occurred on the night of October 25.

The complainant, Mr. Patil, claimed the money belonged to Kishore Savla Seth, a builder, who has investments in Goa and Mumbai. He also claimed the lorries contained some demonetised notes.

However, Mr. Seth suspected that Mr. Patil was behind the robbery and ordered his abduction, according to the complaint. "I was kept in an isolated place for nearly two months and tortured," he said in the complaint.

He also claimed that he was asked to release the money in currency notes of smaller denominations. He told reporters in Nashik on Saturday that he had provided some digital evidence like call records and recordings of videocalls to the police.

Five accused

The complaint named five accused persons – Jayesh Kadam, Vishal Naidu, Sunil Dhumal, Virat Gandhi, and Janardhan Dhaigude.

The Maharashtra SIT said that investigators had arrested five persons and were looking for two more. "There are a lot of claims and counter-claims, and several facts need to be confirmed. Details will be clearer after we make some progress," Mr. Mirkhelkar told reporters in Nashik on Sunday.

Police sources in Belagavi said that there were unconfirmed reports that the money was meant to be used for distribution during the recent local body polls in Maharashtra.

But the vehicles were intercepted by a rival group with the assistance of some police officers and a religious leader. However, the Maharashtra police are yet to release a detailed statement about the progress of the investigation.

State planning transport grids for tier 2 and 3 cities with future needs in mind: DKS

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Karnataka is considering transport grids for tier 2 and 3 cities in the State to meet the developing needs over the next 25 years since foreign companies were interested in investing in these cities, Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar said on Sunday.

Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar at a press conference in Bengaluru on Sunday. ALLEN EGENUSE J.

Companies interested

"Companies have evinced interest in investing in these cities. They have infrastructure in these towns. The government is looking at development transport grids, which will include ring roads in all cities, keeping in mind the growth projects for the next 25 years. Planning is necessary since time is of the essence," he told presspersons here after his return from Davos that hosted the World Economic Forum.

He pointed out that experts were predicting 70% urbanisation over the next 25 years.

"It is in this backdrop that we are looking at transport grids," he said.

Though 45 companies expressed interest to invest in Karnataka, he said, "We decided not to sign agreements with investors at Davos since we would want them to get first-hand information on availability of human resources, infrastructure, weather and others. They are aware that South Indian States offer excellent business environment after China."

Tunnel projects

Regarding the tunnel project, Mr. Shivakumar said, "I discussed the tunnel project with Maharashtra Chief Minister (Devendra Fadnavis) since they are building a lot of tunnels. They have given suggestions on parking facilities near the tunnels. We would like to visit some tunnel projects in Maharashtra." The world is looking at India through Bengaluru which has 450 Fortune 500 companies, he added.

Pointing out at the agreement of Maharashtra Government with JICA for their tunnel projects, he said that he will travel to Japan to discuss Karnataka's tunnel project too.

For Bengaluru

The Deputy Chief Minister, who holds the Bengaluru Development portfolio, said that Karnataka Goverbment will be investing ₹ 2.5 lakh crore over the next five years to develop basic infrastructure in Bengaluru that would include tunnel roads, elevated corridors and buffer roads among other things.

Bidadi tussle resonates in Davos

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The political tussle over land acquisition for AI City between Vokkaliga leaders Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar and Union Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy seems to have resonated at the World Economic Forum in Davos too.

"Many investors are excited about the AI City that we are planning in Bidadi. Some of them expressed reservations about the opposition to the project. I told them that the project would be realised as farmers are giving their land voluntarily," Mr. Shivakumar said.

On Sunday, even as Mr. Kumaraswamy joined the farmers protesting against land acquisition, Mr. Shivakumar told reporters in Doddalahalli, his native village in Kanakapura Assembly constituency, that he was ready for a debate with the former. "I am ready to debate with him any day. However, I need a three-day notice."

When reporters asked his opinion about Mr. Kumaraswamy stating that he would not allow the project, the Deputy Chief Minister said: "I did not conceive of the project. It was he who created the project. He was the one who promised 800 sq. ft. of land for farmers, and we are only continuing it."

Lakkundi excavation yields give a push to bid for UNESCO tag

Girish Pattanashetti
HUBBALLI

Excavations which began on January 16 on the premises of the Kote Veerabhadreshwar temple in Lakkundi village of Gadag district have yielded relics dating back to the Neolithic period, giving a fillip to the push for its nomination for inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage Sites list.

The yield of Neolithic relics came close on the heels of a "treasure" being found by a family in the village while digging to lay the foundation for a house.

A stepwell in Lakkundi village in Gadag district. It is one among the attractions at the village. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Hundred wells

The excavation here – about 12 kilometres from district headquarters Gadag and once known as 'village of hundred wells and temples' – are part of sustained efforts to restore the historical significance of Lakkundi.

It is believed that several architectural wonders still remain covered by houses and other structures or buried beneath the ground in the village. Earlier known as Lokkigundi, the village finds mention in inscriptions dating back to the 11th and 12th centuries. In these inscriptions the place is compared to Amaravati, the capital of Indra in terms of affluence.

Lakkundi was also known for its "tankashale" (mint). Lakkundi was under the rule of the Chalukya, the Yadava, and the Hoysala kings, and was the capital of Hoysala king Eradane Ballala (Veeraballala) in 1192 A.D.

Lakkundi was the "Karmabhoomi" of queen Attimabbe, an ardent follower of Jainism known for her philanthropic works.

It is said that the queen who lived in the 11th century, built many temples and Jain basadis and also sank wells for the benefit of people. An award in her name (Daana Chintamani Attimabbe Prashasti) has been instituted by the State government.

While Jainism prospered in Lakkundi, it also gave shelter to 12th century sharanas like Shivasharana Ajaganna and Sharane Muktayakka who propagated Basaveshwara's message.

Several of Lakkundi's architectural wonders no longer exist now and the Mumbai State Gazetteer mentions only 13 temples having architectural style of Kalyana Chalukyas. Even the wells in Lakkundi are known for their carvings.

Pending project

Uncovering the buried temple structures and wells has been a long pending project, and under the initiative of H.K. Patil, Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs and also Tourism, it has been revived.

As a prelude to the excavation, the Karnataka State Tourism Department Corporation (KSTDC) along with the Archaeology Museums and Heritage Department had launched an initiative in November, 2024, to collect historical relics from the households in the village. Under this, 1,050 historical relics were received from the residents and 13 inscriptions identified. Several of them now find a place in the open museum at Lakkundi for the establishment of which, the residents have joined hands with Lakkundi Heritage Area Development Authority by parting with their lands.

With INTACH

The Tourism Department is also giving a push to the proposal to include a group of monuments at Lakkundi along with temples from surrounding places in the UNESCO's tentative list of World Heritage Sites. This is in line with the Budget announcement on getting UNESCO tag for Lakkundi.

The State has tied up with the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) to fine-tune the proposal.

"So far, two meetings have been held in this regard and they (INTACH) are in the process of finalising the proposal," Commissioner of Lakkundi Heritage Area Development Authority Sharanu Gogeri told *The Hindu*.

There are seven ASI protected monuments in Lakkundi and the State has declared 16 temple structures in the village as protected monuments and plans to add eight more to the list by the month-end. The authority has been directed to carry out a comprehensive study and submit a report on including 20 more temples and other structures to the list, which is likely to happen in February.

Shifting village?

There is also a proposal to shift the village to facilitate restoration of the ancient monuments, but any decision on the relocation will be based on the outcome of the excavation and other surveys of ancient structures being carried out simultaneously.

Siddaramaiah scoffs at JD(S) coming to power in Karnataka

The Hindu Bureau
MYSURU

CM questions how the JD(S) could secure power, when it had won only 17 seats in the last polls

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Sunday scoffed at the possibility of the Janata Dal (Secular) coming to power in Karnataka.

Responding to remarks by JD(S) supremo H.D. Deve Gowda – who had spoken of settling political scores "when their time comes" against alleged attempts to undermine party leader H.D. Revanna – Mr. Siddaramaiah said action against the JD(S) leader had been taken strictly in accordance with the law.

While stating that the JD (S) was free to take action as per law if it ever returned to power, Mr. Siddaramaiah questioned how the party could realistically secure power.

He pointed out that the JD(S) had won only 17 seats in the last Assembly elections, while the Congress had secured 136 seats – a number that has since risen to 140.

Recalling his own stint in the JD(S), he said the party had won 59 seats in the 2004 Assembly elections, but its strength had now fallen sharply to 17.

Mr. Siddaramaiah also rejected the JD(S) leaders' claims that the regional party, along with its ally the BJP, would wipe out the Congress in the next elections, calling it mere "political rhetoric."

He further questioned why the BJP would allow the JD(S) to claim the Chief Minister's post if the saffron party were to win more seats than its ally.

Home Minister denies government delaying arrest of Rajeev Gowda

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Denying that the State government was going soft on the arrest of Congress leader Rajeev Gowda for abusing a government official, Home Minister G. Parameshwara on Sunday said that he will be "definitely" arrested.

"I had given strict instruction (to the police) to arrest him on the first day. Meanwhile, he has gone absconding," the Home Minister told presspersons here. He denied that the government was delaying his arrest and having a soft corner towards the accused.

Mr. Gowda, the Congress party's Assembly candidate in Sidlaghatta, found himself in a soup after an audio clip in which he was heard threatening Sidlaghatta Municipal Commissioner Amrutha Gowda and using derogatory language over the removal of unauthorised banners and flexes that were found to be obstructing the movement of traffic. The audio clip had gone viral, following which the Congress has kept him under suspension.

"How many days will he go absconding? We will definitely arrest him. There is no compromise in this regard," he said.

CORRIDORS OF POWER

'Mysterious' meeting

When Congress leader Rahul Gandhi made a brief stopover in Mysuru en route to Gudalur in Tamil Nadu, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar – widely believed to be rivals for the chief ministerial position – appeared to vie for his attention at the airport.

While the reception upon Mr. Gandhi's arrival from Delhi seemed routine, with both leaders welcoming him, it was his separate conversations with Mr. Siddaramaiah and Mr. Shivakumar on the tarmac before his evening departure that drew media scrutiny.

However, little could be gleaned from these brief exchanges against the backdrop of ongoing speculation about a potential leadership change in the State. If extending a warm welcome to the Central Congress leader was the sole purpose of their visit to Mysuru, questions have emerged about why both leaders' travel itineraries mentioned a "meeting with district-level officials."

The schedules of both the Chief Minister and his deputy, who arrived in Mysuru by special aircraft, explicitly listed meetings with district officials. Yet, neither leader shared any information about these purported meetings.

Why they included meetings with district officials, if welcoming Mr. Gandhi was their only objective, remains a matter of speculation.

Iron for one, rope for the other

The Legislative Assembly saw sharp exchanges following Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot's brief address to the joint session of the legislature last week.

The House was in turmoil as Congress MLA Pradeep Eshwar *(pictured)* repeatedly urged Speaker U.T. Khader to allow him to speak.

When he was finally given the floor, Mr. Eshwar made a remark, suggesting that "iron be placed in the hands of BJP members" who were protesting what they claimed was an insult to the Governor by the government.

Traditionally, iron is placed in the hands of people who suffer epileptic fits.

Mr. Khader, looking none too happy, wryly said he would give iron to the BJP members and a piece of rope to Mr. Eshwar to make things square, triggering laughter across the House.

The exchanges continued, as Mr. Eshwar again stood up to raise objections against Opposition members. Member D. Vedvyasa Kamath repeatedly urged the Speaker to "give rope to Mr. Eshwar" to help restore order in the House.

Will Speaker toe Horatti's line?

Legislative Assembly Speaker U.T. Khader *(pictured)* appears to be aligning with the stance taken by Legislative Council Chairman Basavaraj Horatti on the controversy surrounding Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot's shortened address and abrupt departure from the joint session.

Mr. Horatti has already turned down Congress's proposal to pass a resolution criticising the Governor's address.

Amid exchanges of accusations between members of the ruling party and the Opposition on Friday, the Speaker urged legislators to refrain from confrontations.

Stressing the need to rise above partisan interests on certain issues, he reminded members that the proceedings of the House were being closely observed by the public and should not be turned into a spectacle.

In what appeared to be a message directed at the ruling party benches, Mr. Khader cautioned members against defending issues merely for the sake of party loyalty, noting that there are occasions when legislators must speak beyond party considerations. The Speaker is expected to deliver his ruling on the issue later this week, with the special session scheduled to conclude on Saturday.

Laiqh A. Khan
Nagesh Prabhu

EDUCATIONPLUS

The present within our past

On India's 76th Republic Day, a look at how contemporary history makes its way into classrooms

Meghaa Gupta

GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

"What is history?" I asked a group of eighth graders.

"Things that happened in the past," one volunteered.

"And what are these things?" I probed.

"Empires", "Kings", "Wars", "Freedom Struggle" ...

The answers poured in. Answers I have heard in schools across the country while travelling as an author of a series of history books on Independent India.

So, I ventured, "What about events that happened after Independence? Are they part of history too?"

Some students nodded. Others looked unsure.

Moment of change

"For several decades, events after 1947 were considered too close to be included in school textbooks," says educationist Arvind Sardana, a member of the Social Science group at Eklavya, an NGO that develops and field tests innovative educational programmes. "This changed significantly in the 1980s through the Eklavya experiments and then in the 2000s through some state government initiatives."

A key shift came with the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005, which pushed for learning that was connected to the home and the community life of a child.

Anita Rampal, who was closely involved with the NCF and was Chairperson of the Primary Textbook Teams, says, "It was a watershed because this was at the national level and so it had a different legitimacy. A lot of people who may have been engaging [with contemporary issues] at different places, in different times and different scales came together... Anything you're doing... Physics or Social Studies, unless a student can relate with it, interrogate it, try to observe and see connections with her experiences, it's not going to make sense. A learner is not going to be able to construct her knowledge, which is important to develop an understanding, and does not happen only by reading or repeating what information may be thrown at you."

However, Rampal notes that contemporary issues within the social and cultural context of learners are currently being consciously kept aside, especially those considered 'taboo', such as caste, gender, poverty or religious minorities. Even within the Social Sciences (where they do appear), there are major erasures and distortions in the syllabi and textbooks.

A scattered narrative

Setu Rehan – who heads the Social Science Department at Mind Tree School at Panjokhra, Ambala, Punjab – finds that discourses on contemporary history are spread across so many different subjects that they don't register as a distinctive theme.

Events like the Partition and the Non-Aligned Movement, for example, fall into History. In Civics, students study the making of the Constitution, elections and so on, while events like the Green and Milk Revolutions appear in Geography as well as Economics.

Moreover, such topics don't usually carry much weight in examinations, which further limits the attention given to them.

Pushpalata Pooranan – director of the Pushpalata Schools in Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu – adds that even though the syllabus includes several contemporary themes, "there is very little continuity or context-setting. Instead, students encounter stand-alone topics, which don't facilitate deeper understanding."

A vital discourse

In practice, meaningful engagement with contemporary history depends largely on the initiative of individual schools and teachers. Pooranan considers such engagement essential and actively encourages devoting time and resources to it.

This includes designing lessons in ways that contextualise the past with the present, recommending supplementary readers, encouraging newspaper reading, and having at least one period every week for reading and discussions.

A growing challenge confronting educators is the sheer volume of information on contemporary history available to students online, where valuable scholarship competes with a flood of skewed and fake narratives.

In such a situation, it has become even more important for schools to engage with this history.

Initiatives such as the History for Children project at the Institute of Development Studies, Kolkata, alongside a growing body of postcolonial nonfiction for children, attempt to address this challenge by offering supplementary teaching resources.

Historians Debarati Bagchi and Anwesha Sengupta, who worked on the History for Children project, describe their goal as creating space for questioning and helping children "doubt WhatsApp University knowledge and develop historical consciousness."

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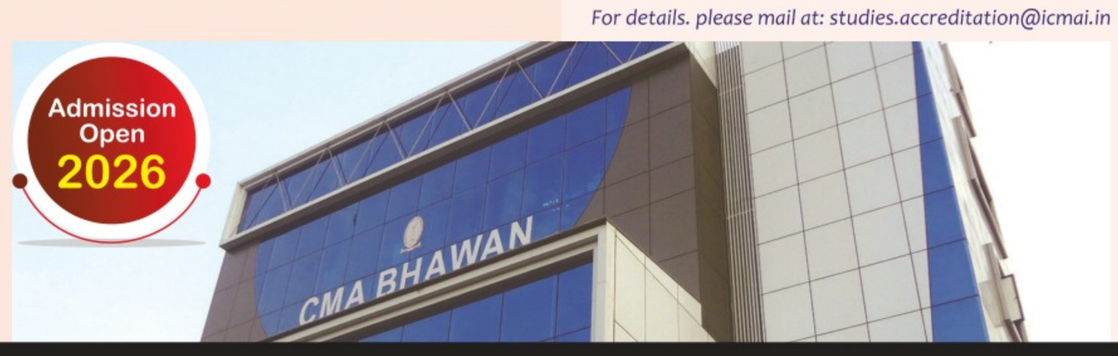

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Karnataka Minister slams Centre over new rural jobs law

Sobhana K. Nair
NEW DELHI

Priyank Kharge

Karnataka's Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Minister Priyank Kharge on Sunday said that the Centre did not consult States before or after "increasing their financial burden" under the new rural employment legislation that replaces the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).

Speaking to *The Hindu*, the Minister said, "The Union government has made no effort in speaking to the State government to explain the provision of the new law. We are awaiting clarifications on what 'notified areas' and 'normative budget' would entail."

'No prior consultation'

Parliament passed the Bill amid Opposition protests on December 19. "Their efforts have so far been to explain how 'Ram' fits into their new law. They could have called it 'Nathuram' if it protected workers' rights," Mr. Kharge added.

The Minister argued that any law imposing additional financial responsibility on States must involve prior consultation. "Whenever a financial burden is to be shared by States, the Centre should consult them. No such consultations took place in this case. The law states that a State has the right to refuse, and then the Chief Justice of India can appoint an arbitrator between the Centre and the State. In this case, they have made it mandatory without any consultation," he said, adding, "There was no mention of (this) in the 16th Finance Commission report."

Mr. Kharge said concerns were not limited to Opposition-ruled States, pointing out that the TDP-led government in Andhra Pradesh, a BJP ally, had written to the Centre seeking assistance for implementing the law.

He also criticised the new law for "lacking safeguards for workers". While the new law increases guaranteed employment from 100 to 125 days, he said it guarantees no work during a 60-day blackout period in the agricultural season. "This exposes workers to exploitation as they may be forced to accept whatever wages are offered during the period."

Centre-State imbalance

He also linked the issue to a larger pattern of Centre-State imbalance, especially affecting southern States. "While our contribution keeps increasing, our share in tax devolution has been declining," he said.

Five bodies retrieved after fire at Hyderabad furniture shop

Two children among those killed; State govt. announces ₹5 lakh *ex gratia*; bodies retrieved from the first-level cellar of the shop; owner booked on the charges of negligence; operations continue

Lavpreet Kaur
HYDERABAD

Grieving family members break down at the Osmania Hospital mortuary in Hyderabad on Sunday. G. RAMAKRISHNA

Over 20 hours after a fire broke out at a furniture shop at Nampally in Hyderabad, the bodies of five people, including two children, were recovered from the first-level cellar of the shop on Sunday. The fire broke out on Saturday afternoon.

According to the Fire Department, the deceased were identified as Akhil, 7, and Praneeth, 11, watchman Yadaiah's sons; Bibi Amma, 60, a housekeeping worker from Karnataka; Mohammed Imtiyaz, 31, a sales agent from Nampally; and Syed Habeeb, 30, an auto driver and resident of Shastripuram.

Telangana Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy announced ₹5 lakh *ex gratia* each to the families of the deceased.

Bodies of Imtiyaz and Habeeb, who had gone inside to rescue the trapped, were completely charred. The remaining three, found in a room, may have died of asphyxiation, as there were no burns on their bodies, an official said.

"Amma and the watchman's family were living in rooms allotted to them on the cellar. Watchman Yadaiah and his wife Lakshmi were not there when the fire broke out," station house officer K. Parashuram said.

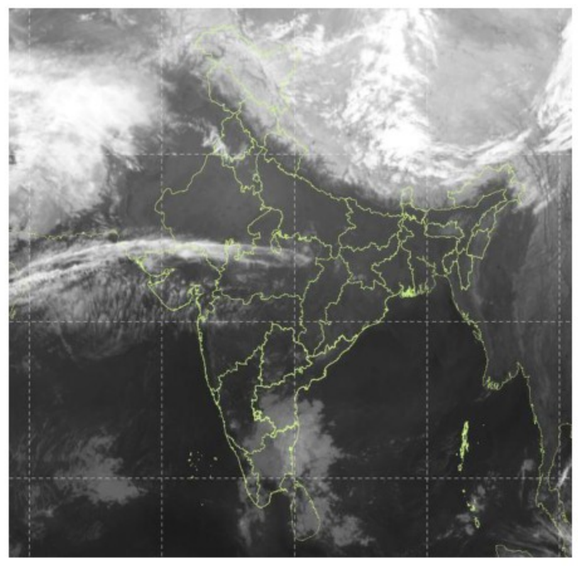
Hyderabad District Fire Officer-I T. Venkanna said the biggest challenge was accessing the two-level cellar that had limited entry points. They were packed with stored goods.

There are four fire tenders still at the spot as the fire continues to be active.

The police arrested Satish Batchas, the owner of Batchas Furniture Castle. A case has been booked against him.

WEATHERWATCH

Rainfall, temperature & air quality in select metros yesterday



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 17.00 HRS)

Forecast for Monday: Thunderstorm with hailstorm very likely at isolated places over Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Gilgit, Baltistan and Muzaffarabad. Thunderstorm with lightning very likely at isolated places over Kerala and Mahe. Dense Fog very likely at isolated places over West Bengal, Sikkim and Uttar Pradesh.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	27.9	11.3	Kozhikode	—	34.5	23.9
Ahmedabad	—	24.4	14.0	Kurnool	—	—	—
Aizawl	—	28.7	13.5	Lucknow	—	22.7	11.0
Allahabad	—	22.8	13.0	Madurai	—	33.2	23.4
Bengaluru	—	26.3	18.6	Mangaluru	—	24.6	18.6
Bhopal	—	23.1	11.9	Mumbai	—	29.6	19.3
Bhubaneswar	—	30.9	13.4	Mysuru	—	29.8	14.0
Chandigarh	—	19.7	6.2	New Delhi	—	18.2	6.6
Chennai	9.0	27.0	22.7	Patna	—	24.9	15.5
Coimbatore	—	29.4	21.4	Port Blair	0.2	30.7	25.0
Dehradun	—	23.2	8.2	Puducherry	16.0	23.4	21.7
Gangtok	—	15.5	6.8	Pune	—	31.2	17.1
Goa	—	25.2	14.0	Raipur	—	30.4	14.9
Guwahati	—	28.4	13.0	Ranchi	—	25.3	8.0
Hubballi	—	31.6	18.9	Shillong	—	17.0	6.2
Hyderabad	—	29.2	17.6	Shimla	—	16.0	2.0
Imphal	—	24.6	7.1	Srinagar	0.4	5.3	-1.6
Jaipur	—	19.6	5.6	Thiruvananthapuram	4.0	31.1	25.0
Kochi	—	31.6	25.0	Tiruchi	0.8	25.7	21.4
Kohima	—	17.6	7.2	Vijayawada	—	—	—
Kolkata	—	28.5	13.5	Visakhapatnam	—	—	—

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO_2	NO_2	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	.85	..94	34	... 108	...163	
Bengaluru	...5	..--	38	 92	...112	
Chennai	.14	..10	30	 84	63	
Delhi	.14	287	42	... 159	...170	
Hyderabad	.11	..61	50	 76	.....--	
Kolkata	...7	140	53	... 273	...216	
Lucknow	...8	..32	60	... 186	...161	
Mumbai	.22	..36	33	 69	...120	
Pune	.--	..71	22	... 269	...187	
Visakhapatnam	...3	..35	13	... 109	...112	

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Singrauli, Madhya Pradesh recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 346 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir recorded a healthy AQI score of 26.

Air Quality Code: Poor Moderate Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO_2: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO_2: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

CPI(M) raises concern over remark by SC judge on Centre's interference

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

M.V. Govindan

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) Kerala State Committee has taken a serious note of the Supreme Court judge Justice Ujjal Bhuyan's concern about the political executive intruding into the judiciary's independence.

CPI(M) State secretary M.V. Govindan said Justice Bhuyan's concerning observation about the Central government whittling down the judiciary's independence should concern every citizen.

"The judge had obliquely referred to the Supreme Court Collegium rescinding its decision in October last to transfer Atul Sreedharan, a judge of the Madhya Pradesh High Court, to the Chhattisgarh High Court at the Central government's request. The decision has opened the door for the Central government to bend the SC Collegium to its will," he said.

Mr. Govindan said Justice Sreedharan had become a thorn in the side of Madhya Pradesh's BJP government.

"Justice Sreedharan, a Malayalee, had hauled up Vijay Shah, an MP and Minister, for disparaging Army spokeswoman Colonel Sofia Qureshi, who briefed the media on Operation Sindoor, on religious lines. He had also ruled against illegal detentions by the Jammu and Kashmir administration," he added.

Top attraction

Tourism hub: Visitors throng stalls set up on the R.K. Beach as part of 'Visakha Utsav' in Visakhapatnam on Sunday. The nine-day tourism festival that began on Saturday features over 500 programmes across Visakhapatnam, Anakapalli and ASR districts. K.R. DEEPAK

Constitution facing challenges from autonomous bodies: former SC judge

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA

Justice B. Sudarshan Reddy

Former Supreme Court judge Justice B. Sudershan Reddy (retd.) on Sunday observed that the Constitution was facing challenges from all autonomous institutions, even the judiciary, whose duty was to uphold it.

Citing the controversial verdict by a judge of the Madras High Court on the petition related to the lighting of the sacred lamp in Thirupparankundram in Madurai district, he said the courts, like other institutions, were under the obligation to adhere to the Constitutional norms.

Participating as chief guest in a seminar on 'Challenges in implementing the Constitution', jointly organised by the All India Lawyers' Union (AILU) and Jana Vignana Vedika here, Justice Sudershan Reddy said his statement might appear to be a sweeping one, but it was not without a basis, while pointing out that there were multiple judgments that were perceived to have undermined Constitutional principles. "The process of judicial appointments and transfers has also been quite often doubted, requiring remedial action," he said.

Governors' actions

The Governors' refusal to read out the speeches given to them by the elected governments in the Legislative Assemblies and their growing tendency to walk out were unfortunate, he observed.

He emphasised that the defiance of the Council of Ministers by a Governor should be dealt with appropriately. The inability to impeach a Governor for misconduct, contrary to the provision to remove the President of India or the Vice-President through due procedure, was a Constitutional vulnerability, he asserted.

Justice Sudershan Reddy said the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls was objectionable as all possible efforts were being made to eliminate non-citizens, migrants and foreign nationals on unjustifiable grounds.

He said the delimitation of constituencies had its own repercussions, including huge financial implications, and faulted the repeated "felicitations" of Union Ministers by the Chief Ministers of States, saying it was bad in the federal system of governance.

A.P. doctor injected with HIV-positive blood; 4 held

The Hindu Bureau
KURNOOL

A 34-year-old woman has been arrested for allegedly injecting a woman doctor with the blood of an HIV-positive person, in Kurnool in Andhra Pradesh on January 9. Three accomplices have also been been arrested.

According to Kurnool DSP J. Babu Prasad, the main accused, Beechupally Boya Vasundhara, was a childhood friend of the victim's husband.

The police said Vasundhara stalked the victim for nearly a year in preparation for committing the crime.

Concerns over Malayalam Language Bill unfounded, says Kerala Education Minister

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

V. Sivankutty

Kerala General Education Minister V. Sivankutty said on Sunday that the concerns raised over the Malayalam Language Bill, 2025, were unfounded, considering the importance given by the State government for the welfare of linguistic minorities.

The General Education Department, he said, is set to introduce revised textbooks for Class 11 in the academic year 2026-27.

Revised textbooks

Giving special consideration to the Kannada-speaking linguistic minority, textbooks for them were being made available.

The new books, including 41 titles covering languages and computer science, will be released in the second week of February. The teacher texts for these have also been prepared, he said.

"We have noted criticisms from certain quarters regarding the Malayalam language Bill. Such criticisms are being made without understanding the actual facts," he said.

He added the revised curriculum focused on practical, application-based learning, and will reinforce Kerala's position as a national model in public education.

The government had completed the revision of textbooks for Classes 1 to 10 by the academic year 2025-26, making Kerala the first State to complete the process on schedule.

A total of 597 textbook titles were developed in Malayalam, English, Tamil and Kannada.

The Minister also informed that advanced robotic kits will be distributed to all high schools through Kerala Infrastructure and Technology for Education (KITE) to strengthen robotics education.

Advanced robotic kits

As many as 2,500 robotics kits will be distributed through Little KITES units in February.

As part of the initiative, new kits supporting Internet of Things (IoT)-based device development are being introduced. The advanced kits contain various features including ESP-32 development boards, multiple sensors and rechargeable battery packs. Students will gain hands-on experience in block coding, Python and C programming.

A new official website for the Higher Secondary Education department (www.hseportal.kerala.gov.in) has been launched in collaboration with the National Informatics Centre. All official notifications will be issued through the new platform.

Mr. Sivankutty also said that the State has invested over ₹4,000 crore through Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB) for public education infrastructure. Development works were undertaken in 973 schools.

CPI(M) claims Cong. backed off from Sabarimala gold case

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Pictures of Sonia Gandhi with prime suspect put the party on the defensive, says M.V. Govindan

Communist Party of India (Marxist) Kerala State committee said the Congress had beaten a hasty retreat on the Sabarimala gold theft scandal after pictures of senior Congress leader Sonia Gandhi with the main suspect in the case went viral on social media.

"The incriminating photographs showed the prime accused in the case Unnikrishnan Potti, and the person accused of receiving the temple's stolen property flanking Ms. Gandhi at her Delhi residence, in the presence of two Congress MPs from Kerala. The incontrovertible evidence has put the Congress on the defensive," CPI(M) State secretary M.V. Govindan said.

Mr. Govindan said the Special Investigation Team (SIT) probe has also revealed that the Congress-appointed Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) had opened the door for the accused Mr. Potti to loot the temple in conjunction with the senior tantri.

IEW
INDIA ENERGY WEEK 2026

सत्यमेव जयते
MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS
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India Energy Week 2026

From India to the World

Collaborating for a shared tomorrow.

Clean energy is the need of the hour.
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- Narendra Modi

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Neo-colonial shadows

Donald Trump is driving the U.S.'s allies towards China with his antics

President Donald Trump's neo-colonial posturing at the World Economic Forum in Davos could mark the opening salvo of what may be termed great-power climate wars – an irony, given that it is being waged by a climate-change denier. As global warming is rapidly melting Arctic polar ice, it has sharpened interest in the Northern Sea Route (NSR), which promises to cut shipping time between East Asia, western Europe and North America. The route also carries geopolitical implications: it enables tighter trade and market integration between China and the Western Hemisphere – an outcome Mr. Trump has often sought to obstruct. At Davos, his renewed suggestion that the U.S. could "purchase" Greenland has rattled allies and revived colonial anxieties. The remark came even as Sara Olsvig, chair of the Inuit Circumpolar Council, has said that "there's no such thing as a better coloniser", reflecting on over three centuries of Danish rule.

Greenland's strategic value is undeniable. China has conducted trial commercial voyages through the NSR, promoting it as a shorter, and potentially lower-emission, shipping route, even though its existence is a product of climate breakdown. Chinese firms have also shown sustained interest in Greenland's significant mineral wealth, particularly rare earths. For Mr. Trump, who has weaponised trade and was forced to moderate tariffs against China due to Beijing's dominance over rare earth supply chains, such activity is easily framed as strategic encroachment into America's sphere of influence. Yet, extraction in Greenland would be neither easy nor uncontested. Much of the mineral wealth is buried deep under permanent ice, and local resistance is likely. Greenlanders have fought long struggles for political and economic sovereignty, achieving enhanced self-rule only in 2009. Recent opinion polls suggest that an overwhelming majority of Greenland's population opposes any form of American rule. Nevertheless, Mr. Trump claimed on the sidelines of Davos that Washington had reached a "framework" with the European Union, addressing U.S. security and resource interests. Media reports of proposals allowing indefinite American basing rights and access to subsoil resources reinforce the perception that this push is driven less by security than by extraction and control. Davos, long projected as a forum for global cooperation, appeared this year as a staging ground for resurgent resource nationalism. In doing so, it may have sown the seeds of a new world order, undermining the very rules-based system that post-war America once built. Ironically, by alienating allies, Mr. Trump may be nudging them towards Beijing – a China that has now arrived as a full-spectrum great power.

Killer agents

Federal-State relations have reached breaking point in Minnesota

The fatal shooting of Alex Pretti by federal agents in Minneapolis marks a dramatic escalation in the Trump administration's aggressive immigration enforcement campaign. On January 24, the 37-year-old nurse was killed during a federal operation – the second by agents in the city in recent weeks. The incident sparked large protests, building on weeks of resistance to what officials describe as the largest immigration enforcement operation in American history. The unrest reflects broader community outrage that intensified after the January 7 killing of Renée Good, a 37-year-old mother, by a federal agent. Federal agencies as well as President Trump swiftly defended the operation, saying that Pretti was carrying a loaded gun. White House adviser Stephen Miller claimed that Pretti was a "domestic terrorist" who "tried to assassinate federal law enforcement". But the U.S. citizen had no serious criminal history. Legal experts have confirmed that he was a lawful gun owner with a permit. Critically, multiple bystander videos contradict the official narrative: footage showed Pretti holding a phone and his gun appeared to have been taken away by an agent before another shot him.

Federal-State tensions have reached a breaking point in Minnesota, where Governor Tim Walz, a Democrat, has described immigration enforcement as "organized brutality". Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey has called on Mr. Trump to "end this operation now". Police Chief Brian O'Hara reported that Homeland Security officials blocked State investigators from the crime scene, prompting Minnesota officials to file emergency lawsuits demanding evidence preservation. In a controversial move, Attorney General Pam Bondi reportedly offered to withdraw the ICE from Minnesota in exchange for access to the State's voter database – a move critics viewed as an attempt to politicise the crisis. At the root of this crisis is Mr. Trump's hardline immigration policy and the massive deployment of federal agents to Minneapolis. Reports indicate that their aggressive behaviour and crowd control tactics are triggering fear and terrorising entire communities. For the Trump administration, immigration enforcement is a war at home rather than civil law enforcement. And killings suggest that this approach is gravely counterproductive. When federal agents operate with impunity, reject local oversight, resist shared investigation and use lethal force, they risk undermining the very rule of law that they claim to uphold, besides straining the federal-State balance. Mr. Trump, who called Iranian protesters "patriots" and offered them help, should show at least some of that concern for the American protesters. He should withdraw federal agents from Minneapolis immediately and ensure accountability for the agents who kill.

The Donroe Doctrine, Venezuela's fragile pragmatism

Srinivasan Ramani

Statecraft often rides on contradictions. None is more evident than in the aftermath of the U.S. military intervention in Venezuela and its abduction of sitting President Nicolás Maduro. On January 15, as Venezuela's opposition leader María Corina Machado met U.S. President Donald Trump at the White House and handed over the Nobel Peace Prize she had won in 2025 for leading Venezuela's movement against "autocracy", CIA Director John Ratcliffe was in Caracas meeting with Delcy Rodríguez, Mr. Maduro's former Vice-President and now the interim President of the beleaguered country. On January 14, Mr. Trump had described Ms Rodríguez as "a terrific person" with whom the U.S. was "getting along very well."

This spectacle, where the architect of an invasion is embracing a key figure from the regime whose leader he had just abducted, captures the essence of what might be called the "Donroe Doctrine": an extension of the Monroe Doctrine that represents a departure from earlier forms of U.S. imperialism. Unlike the neocon interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan, which sought not only resource extraction but also "nation-building" and the installation of ideologically aligned regimes, the Venezuela operation is more nakedly transactional. Mr. Trump's emphasis is on securing imperial control in order to maximise resource extraction, even while leaving in place a governing apparatus that is led by the very Bolivarians whose leader was snatched as "the head of the snake", as long as it proves compliant.

Ghanaian leader Kwame Nkrumah, writing in 1965, defined this arrangement presciently: "The essence of neo-colonialism is that the [s]tate which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside."

Venezuela today in a way fits this description. On January 15, Ms. Rodríguez delivered defiant rhetoric in her State of the Union address even as she had to negotiate the terms of her country's economic subordination with the CIA director.

A case of 'regime management'

The Trump administration's preference for "regime management" over "regime change" is not out of any respect for Venezuelan sovereignty. *The New York Times* reported that senior policymakers explicitly discussed how removing the Bolivarian government would risk replicating the disastrous dissolution of Iraq's army and bureaucracy. Mr. Trump has long criticised the military escalation in Iraq. Besides, his Make America Great Again' (MAGA) base, large sections of which opposed the interventions under the Bush, Clinton, and Obama administrations, do not want another quagmire.

In Ms. Rodríguez, Washington sees someone who can maintain equilibrium with the powerful armed forces led by Defence Minister Vladimir Padrino López and the ruling party's ideologues such as Interior Minister Diosdado Cabello, who controls the PSUV party and the militant colectivos of the Bolivarian movement. The opposition, with its leadership having been driven underground and lacking institutional continuity, cannot offer this. Ms. Machado's obsequious approval of Mr. Trump's actions, including absurd claims about Mr. Maduro's intervention in the 2020 U.S. elections, has so far earned her little. There has been considerable speculation about why the Bolivarians provided so little resistance to the U.S. actions, and why Ms. Rodríguez's responses since the invasion have seemed like capitulation. Left-wing activist Tariq Ali, has in an interview put it bluntly: "I think Delcy has capitulated completely." He concluded that "important sections of the Bolivarian state apparatus were prepared to let Maduro go".

> Venezuela is now a subordinate partner to the U.S., and the pointer is that the Global South needs to act in concert

While this account is outlandish, the current choices for Ms. Rodríguez are limited. The country has been under crushing U.S. sanctions since the late 2010s, targeting its oil sector – the lifeblood of its economy – and brought hyperinflation and economic collapse.

To circumvent these sanctions, Venezuela redirected crude exports to China and other countries through a "shadow fleet" of aging tankers. It relied on Russia and Cuba. But now, with a naval blockade in place, ships carrying Venezuelan crude to Cuba and China have been seized and Chinese tankers have been denied access to Venezuelan waters.

Neither China nor Russia has shown any willingness to confront the U.S. in its self-declared backyard. In this context, the regime's adoption of pragmatism, negotiating with Washington to ease sanctions, even while the blockade remains, in order to keep the economy afloat and preserve what remains of the welfare state, appears less like capitulation than the only available strategy for survival. From all accounts, this has been a consensus among the different wings of the Bolivarian state.

The Bolivarians were never opposed to economic partnership with U.S. companies. They were opposed to the terms of partnership which led to the late Hugo Chávez's 2001 Hydrocarbon Law allowing foreign companies to participate only as minority stakeholders in joint ventures with the state oil company, PDVSA, and ensuring that Venezuela received the lion's share of profits.

Those terms are now being rewritten under duress. But the alternative, attempting to maintain the old model in a sanctioned environment, with no access to world markets and no great-power protection, is equally untenable. The pragmatic calculation is to secure whatever economic breathing room is possible and wait for the geopolitical situation to turn.

Rodríguez and a balancing act

As Vice-President overseeing the economy under U.S. sanctions, Ms. Rodríguez managed to bring down hyperinflation and achieve modest GDP growth from a low base. Oil production, which had collapsed below 4,00,000 barrels a day, recovered to 9,00,000 barrels under arrangements she promoted, including the 2020 Anti-Blockade Law that allowed greater private investment and ownership in the oil sector, effectively trading some sovereign control for economic survival.

In her State of the Union address, she spoke of the U.S. crossing "red lines" and Venezuela's willingness to "confront them diplomatically" while attacking the opposition for "[competing] to see who could grovel the most." But in talks with Washington, she has sought to negotiate economic survival through the country's key leverage: its oil.

Under the Biden administration, companies such as Chevron enjoyed limited licences allowing them to export Venezuelan crude while depositing proceeds in private Venezuelan banks – an indirect way for the government to earn foreign exchange. The Trump administration halted this before the invasion and oil revenues now flow through accounts in Qatar, accessible to the Venezuelan state only with American approval. Imports from these proceeds must be from American manufacturers. Reports indicate that despite the blockade, commodities traders Vitol and Trafigura have received licences to move Venezuelan crude, with initial sales reportedly worth $500 million. In essence, Mr. Trump is reversing the sanctions he initiated, but on his own terms. The country is being offered what it was denied under sanctions – U.S. investment and participation in oil extraction – but now as a subordinate partner.

Lessons beyond borders

Yet, Washington's leverage faces its own constraints. Venezuelan crude is predominantly heavy and extra-heavy oil, expensive to extract and refine. ExxonMobil's chief executive publicly called Venezuela "uninvestable". With oil prices relatively low, the profit margins that would justify such investments remain uncertain. This economic reality may ultimately require the administration to allow broader market access for Venezuelan crude including sales to China and India through licensed intermediaries and more favourable revenue-sharing terms. The present situation is neither the regime change that Ms. Machado and her supporters in the West champion nor the sovereign resource control that the Bolivarian project promised when Mr. Chávez first came to power. Ms. Rodríguez will seek to preserve what she can of the welfare state. But she will remain constrained.

Venezuela's travails offer a lesson for the developing world. Economic diversification could have mattered, but that alone is insufficient when a hegemon intervenes. The warning is about the limits of the emerging multipolar order: when the Trump regime moved against Venezuela, neither China nor Russia, for all their rhetoric about a post-American world, was willing to confront Washington in its declared sphere of influence. An alternative may only emerge if the Global South acts in concert rather than waiting for great-power rivalries to provide shelter.

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India-UAE ties — stability, substance, strategic union

Sunjay Sudhir

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At a time of significant churn in global geopolitical equations, relations between India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) stand out for their remarkable stability and a steady deepening. The very brief visit of UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan ((MbZ) to India, last week, was a clear reflection of this robustness. The January 19, 2026 visit was substantive, outcome-oriented and strategically significant. This visit, the eleventh at the leadership level in as many years, shows the mutual importance the countries accord to each other.

A continuity

Since MbZ's last visit in January 2024 as the chief guest at the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit, two other high-profile engagements have reinforced bilateral momentum. At the Prime Minister's personal invitation, the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed, and the Crown Prince of Dubai, Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed Al Maktoum, visited India, yielding concrete outcomes across sectors such as defence, nuclear cooperation, energy, education and economic engagement. The active participation of the next generation of Emirati leadership lends a distinctive depth and continuity to the India-UAE partnership.

Following the signing of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Agreement in 2017, the relationship has evolved in a genuinely comprehensive manner. MbZ's latest visit produced a wide-ranging set of outcomes, including a defence cooperation framework, a joint space initiative, a target of $200 billion in bilateral trade, collaboration in artificial intelligence, data embassies, infrastructure investment, partnership on small nuclear reactors, a supercomputing cluster in India, and a 10-year LNG supply agreement.

The signing of a Letter of Intent towards a Strategic Defence Partnership is timely, given the evolving defence architecture in parts of West Asia. Equally significant was the unequivocal joint condemnation of terrorism in all its forms, and the emphasis that no country should provide a safe haven to those who finance, plan, or perpetrate such acts.

> The partnership is based on trust and shared interests, and stands out for its stability

Infrastructure investment

The UAE's interest in India's infrastructure story is well established. The Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA)'s $1 billion commitment to India's National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) Master Fund in 2017 was an early signal. Since then, UAE entities have emerged as key long-term substantial investors.

Ongoing discussions on the UAE's participation in developing the Special Investment Region in Dholera, Gujarat reflect this commitment. The envisaged partnership covers strategic assets including an international airport, pilot training facilities, maintenance and repair infrastructure, a greenfield port, a smart urban township, rail connectivity and energy infrastructure.

Investor interest in Dholera has been reinforced by successful roadshows in the UAE, where sovereign wealth funds and institutional investors have shown a strong appetite. Dholera's appeal lies in its status as a government-backed smart city, with advanced connectivity and utilities, anchor investments by major corporates, focus on high-technology sectors such as semiconductors and electric vehicles, and its potential as a future hub within the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor. The announcement that DP World and First Abu Dhabi Bank will establish offices in GIFT City further enhances its profile as an emerging international financial centre. These offices will serve as critical bridges connecting Indian companies with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and Middle East and Northern Africa markets. ADIA already operates from GIFT City, reinforcing the UAE's long-term financial engagement with India. Buoyed by the strong performance of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), which has led to a 37% rise in bilateral trade since FY 2022-23, leaders have set an ambitious target of $200 billion in trade by 2032. India's exports to the UAE grew by 28% last year to $36 billion, while imports rose by 41% to $64 billion, making the target realistic. This expansion could partly offset export pressures arising from unilateral tariff measures elsewhere. Beyond trade volumes, CEPA has significantly deepened trust between businesses and investors on both sides.

Initiatives such as Bharat Mart at Jebel Ali will provide a major boost to India's MSME exporters. The proposed Bharat-Africa Setu aims to connect Indian exporters with markets across Africa by leveraging DP World's logistics footprint. The Virtual Trade Corridor announced during Sheikh Khaled's visit is close to becoming operational and could also support broader connectivity initiatives such as the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor.

Building on the MoU on civil nuclear cooperation signed in September 2024, the decision to explore partnerships in advanced nuclear technologies, including large reactors, small modular reactors, operations and safety, is particularly significant. With the UAE generating nearly a quarter of its electricity from nuclear power, complementarities are evident, especially in the context of India's clean energy ambition.

The overview

The significance of MbZ's visit extends beyond announced deliverables. Recent intra-GCC political dynamics could have wider regional implications. India, with deep stakes across West Asia, must continue to carefully recalibrate its relationships, guided by strategic autonomy and multi-alignment, while avoiding entanglement in regional rivalries. The India-UAE partnership, anchored in trust and shared interests, offers a stable pillar amid regional uncertainty.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Poll talk in the South

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's advocacy in recent rallies in Kerala and Tamil Nadu to boost the NDA's prospects ahead of the 2026 Assembly elections in these States needs comment. That a "double engine" *sarkar* (same government at the Centre and State) will bring more development is baseless and misleading. It is a fact that the southern States are mostly governed by non-BJP parties but figure in the top performing States in the country. The concept of a double engine government is odd as India is a union of States. The 'double engine' concept almost sounds like a veiled threat — that States have to be at the Centre's mercy.

Kshirasagara Balaji Rao,
Hyderabad

The 'single-engine' DMK government has done far better than the 'double-engine' governments in BJP-ruled States, as is evident from the high human development indices and growth in the southern State. The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin's witty riposte, that Mr. Modi's 'double engine' is a *'dabba* engine', is one that will resonate with the people.

G. David Milton,
Maruthancode, Tami Nadu

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the postal address.

Bigger schools, better futures

A recent visit to China offered a striking view of what scale and holistic school design can achieve. A Class 1-9 school there serves around 1,200 students, with K-12 schools averaging 2,800 students. This is in stark contrast with India, where an average government K-8 school has around 150 students. Although three times the size of India, China has only one-third the number of schools. While India has succeeded in ensuring access at the elementary level, China has used scale to strengthen quality. Its schools have specialised subject teachers, support staff, viable vocational laboratories, and counselling, sports, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) labs, and co-curriculars – the kind of holistic learning environment that the National Education Policy, 2020, envisions.

India has made enormous strides in enrolment and infrastructure, but the school network remains fragmented. There are about 5.6 lakh schools nationally, which enrol less than 50 students each. Over 1 lakh single-teacher schools cover 33 lakh students, making multi-grade teaching a necessity (UDISE 24-25). At secondary levels, the need for subject expertise and lab infrastructure becomes even more critical. Around 40% of government secondary schools have fewer than 100 students enrolled (across Classes 9-12), making such provision difficult. Today, only 19% of schools have functional ICT labs, 51% have integrated science labs; about 10% offer higher secondary classes; and just 6% provide vocational education (UDISE 24-25).

Ashish Dhawan
Founder-CEO, The Convergence Foundation

Bikkrama Daulet Singh
Operating Partner, The Convergence Foundation

Experiments with schools

These gaps highlight the next phase of India's education reform: building school systems that address not only access, but also the quality of education. Several States have already experimented with different models of this. Rajasthan has established one upgraded, well-resourced government school in every Gram Panchayat, called Adarsh Schools. Over the past decade, the State has upgraded thousands of schools in a phased manner – improving infrastructure, staff deployment, and secondary-grade offerings. In Uttar Pradesh, Model Composite Schools (Class 1-12) have been approved in every district; these will have tech-based learning, including smart classrooms and WiFi. Madhya Pradesh has consolidated 36,000 under-enrolled schools under the NITI Aayog's SATH-E programme to create larger campuses with better facilities. In 2023, the Chief Minister announced the rollout of one 'CM RISE' school (now Maharishi Sandipani Schools) for every 25-30 villages to improve learning. Odisha, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and Gujarat are also moving in this direction.

Composite and consolidated schools are not about efficiency alone; their core purpose is to create real learning environments, with one teacher per class and adequate subject specialists to support every child. Equity must remain paramount. This is enabled through decentralised decision-making, and supported by transport facilities so that no child loses access. Equally essential is thoughtful change management: engaging teachers, parents, and communities early to build consensus and ensure smooth, trusted transitions towards larger, integrated schools.

Drawing on these lessons, two clear directional goals can guide India's progress towards universal, high-quality school education by 2035. The first is to have one K-8 school in every Gram Panchayat. By 2035, India should transition towards K-8 integrated schools (elementary and middle) as the default elementary school model. If each K-8 school serves around 300 students, these campuses could collectively educate close to 8.1 crore children. This shift could allow each school to reach the minimum enrolment threshold required for one teacher per class, and better facilities, leading to a better learning environment. Second, only 87% of students transition from middle to secondary school, and this falls to around 75% from secondary to higher secondary. Too often, secondary education is delivered through fragmented, under-resourced campuses with limited subject teachers, weak lab infrastructure, and few pathways beyond board examinations. What India needs at scale are composite secondary schools.

> The road to universal, high-quality school education runs through integrated schools

By 2035, India is projected to have nearly 8 crore students in Classes 9-12. This scale creates the possibility of large, well-resourced secondary schools with the capacity to offer real-world, application-based learning, career guidance, subject specialist teachers and multiple academic and vocational pathways. Supported by transport facilities, such schools ensure that distance does not become a barrier to continuing education and allow secondary schooling to move beyond exam preparation.

Achieving these goals

India needs State-specific road maps that lay out how each State will move towards larger, well-resourced schools, grounded in local realities of population density, geography and existing school networks. States can consider the following levers while designing these road maps. The first is thoughtful teacher deployment so that there is one teacher per class and subject specialists. The second is localised planning and decentralised decision making. The third is coming up with transport solutions for students. States will need a mix of transport models to ensure that students can reach these schools. The fourth is providing funding for composite schools. Samagra Shiksha, supported by State funds and coordinated with other schemes, can finance these upgrades.

Rot in the ranks

Police involvement in criminal cases highlights a deeper underlying problem

STATE OF PLAY

K.V. Aditya Bhardwaj
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Speaking at the annual conference of IPS officers recently, Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah made the startling revelation that the State's police personnel were themselves found to be involved in 88 criminal cases last year, and booked. He termed the state of affairs "shameful". His reprimand came after a series of high-profile cases made headlines, including an ATM cash van heist in Bengaluru in which a head constable turned out to be the kingpin, and several violations and alleged corruption in Bengaluru's Central Prison. Over the past year, the Maharashtra Police have busted narcotics manufacturing units in Mysuru and Bengaluru, seizing material worth several crores. This shows the failure of the Karnataka Police to arrest a single synthetic drug producer throughout the year.

The establishment has dealt with these embarrassing events by suspending police personnel. Nearly 150 of them were suspended in Bengaluru alone in 2025 – including the City Police Commissioner in connection with the RCB stampede case – for corruption, criminal offences, or dereliction of duty.

However, the elephant in the room is the allegedly pervasive 'cash for postings' problem, where police postings are bought with money. Police sources say that the cost of securing postings has become "astronomical," worsening corruption. Given this alleged state of affairs, the leadership is either helpless or has lost the moral authority to pull up wrongdoers, they say. Suspensions have become an eyewash, as most officers are back in action after a short hiatus. None of them has faced severe consequences.

Opposition leaders, particularly Union Minister and JD (S) leader H.D. Kumaraswamy, have repeatedly alleged that there is a 'transfer *dhandhe*', or transfer business, being run by the State government. They allege that the Congress's five guarantee schemes eat into a major chunk of the State's funds. As a result, other developmental works that earlier kept the "corruption economy" going have taken a hit, with cash-for-postings now occupying their place.

On December 17, 2025, there was a three-hour debate on Home Department issues during the winter session of the Legislative Assembly. Several leaders, including the Leader of the Opposition, R. Ashok, hinted that cash-for-postings were driving police corruption. Basanagouda Patil Yatnal, an MLA suspended from the BJP, said that the police department could be reformed only if all the MLAs stop taking money from the police. Hinting at a "competitive bidding" to get postings, he said, "If someone has paid ₹50 crore to become Commissioner, once he takes charge, he has to invariably make ₹100 crore, isn't it?" The Home Minister did not answer.

Recently, a Bengaluru City Assistant Commissioner of Police was caught in a trap case by the Lokayukta Police while taking a bribe from a restaurateur. The restaurateur, who was the complainant, alleged that the officer was forcing him to pay ₹50,000 a month, to operate his establishment beyond the 1 a.m. deadline even though he did not want to do business beyond the deadline. A high-ranking officer told *The Hindu* that this "best encapsulates the ground reality." An SP in the Lokayukta was himself accused of extortion in the name of anti-corruption action.

In fact, the Home Minister, Dr. G. Parameshwara, who has been criticised for mishandling department affairs, has also come under a cloud for his association with controversial DGP, K. Ramachandra Rao. Mr. Rao's stepdaughter, Ranya Rao, was arrested last year, after she was caught smuggling gold at Bengaluru airport. She allegedly misused Mr. Rao's police escort to smuggle gold. The ED later raided educational institutions linked to Dr. Parameshwara in connection with the case. Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar told the media that the raids were related to a diamond necklace that Dr. Parameshwara had gifted Ms. Rao at her wedding. Mr. Rao was suspended last week over videos purportedly showing him in compromising positions with women in his office.

The postings of all IPS officers are handled by the Department of Personnel and Administrative Reforms, whose charge is usually held by the Chief Minister, who also controls the intelligence department. Together, these arrangements hollow out the authority of the Home Minister. If the Karnataka Police's HR management has gone awry, responsibility ultimately rests with the leadership.

Expectations from a gender lens in Budget 2026-27

What the Budget could do to unlock women's time, productivity, and participation in India's growth story

DATA POINT

Shravani Prakash
Tanu M. Goyal
Anjhana Ramesh

As India prepares for Budget 2026-27, it must confront a fundamental, yet persistently ignored, constraint on growth: women's time poverty. Women contribute only about 18% to India's GDP, not because they work less, but because a large share of their labour remains unpaid and uncounted in national income. About 40% of India's women are now in the labour force, largely concentrated in unpaid agricultural work, but 60% of women who are out of the labour force cite domestic and care responsibilities as the reason (Periodic Labour Force Survey data).

This is the result of a combination of supply-and-demand side constraints – care burdens, limited skills, mobility barriers, and restrictive social norms and limited creation of decent jobs to absorb women's time remuneratively. It is important, therefore, to explicitly value, free up, and productively redistribute women's time. The Union Budget, particularly the gender budget, is a powerful instrument to enable this outcome.

Women labourers on salt pans in Thoothukudi district, Tamil Nadu. RAJESH N.

Reimagining schemes

We outline five key outcomes that Budget 2026-27 could do to unlock women's time, productivity, and participation in India's growth story. First, invest where women's time is truly lost. The Time Use Survey (2025) shows that the time women spent on unpaid care and domestic work increased marginally from 364 minutes per day in 2019 to 366 minutes in 2024, despite an increase in the time spent on paid work from 68 to 76 minutes, implying an overall increase in working hours, both paid and unpaid. This underscores the need to evaluate and reimagine welfare and social schemes, which dominate gender budgets, by embedding time-use metrics into them.

Take, for instance, the large-scale Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), which is seen as women-empowering with a significant gender budget, because homes are registered in women's names. But to shift housing from a static asset to a time-saving enabler for women, the scheme must count a 'gender-complete house' as the unit of budgeting and reporting – fitted with time-saving infrastructure, including piped drinking water, electricity supply, functional toilets, and clean cooking energy. There are existing initiatives, but they require greater coordination with a gender lens. The upcoming Budget could mandate automatic convergence of PMAY with schemes such as Jal Jeevan Mission (drinking water), Swachh Bharat Mission (sanitation), rooftop solar (electricity), and Ujjwala (clean cooking).

Women's workforce participation also remains constrained because childcare services are fragmented, under-resourced, and misaligned with women's working hours. At present, Palna creches, Anganwadis, and POSHAN schemes operate in silos, often duplicating infrastructure while leaving gaps in coverage. Learning from models such as Karnataka's 'Koosina Mane', the gender budget could pool allocations for creches, Anganwadis, and nutrition under a 'Care Infrastructure Convergence Window', and mandate reporting outcomes in women's time saved and hours of care redistributed, not just meals served or centres opened.

Redesigning schemes

Second, tie allocations to time-measured outcomes. While the gender budget has expanded steadily and accounted for a record 8.9% of total Union Budget allocations or 1% of GDP, more than 75% of all allocations in 2025-26 fall under Part B (30-99% gender specific) and Part C (below 30%), indicating that gender concerns have been integrated across general schemes. However, very often, portions of existing schemes are re-labelled as gender-responsive; they are not redesigned to address women's specific barriers. Therefore, ministries must be encouraged to think through the gender components of schemes before demanding allocations under the gender budget.

Agriculture illustrates this disconnect starkly. Despite employing the largest share of women workers, many as unpaid family labour, the sector received only about 4.2% of the gender budget flows. A large part of this is allocated to the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) scheme, which, when evaluated, shows that it primarily benefits landowners who are predominantly male, and does not move women out of unpaid labour.

Labour force participation

Third, generate demand for women's labour to productively utilise their time. Gender budgeting must be embedded within employment-generation strategies. The newly launched Employment-Linked Incentive scheme, designed to generate more than 3.5 crore jobs in two years, must include a gender budget allocation and set an ambitious goal of ensuring at least 50% of the new jobs are created for women. The allocated funds could be used for creating additional incentives for enterprises hiring women, like direct wage subsidies and higher social security support.

For rural areas, MGNREGA, now rebranded as VB-GRAM G, must receive renewed funding priority as women comprise over 50% of the beneficiaries. With VB-GRAM G proposing to expand guaranteed employment from 100 to 125 days, in addition to women-friendly features including work close to home and childcare facilities, increased funding and a continued gender focus (maintaining the nearly 50% gender budget allocation) would address both demand and supply constraints on women's time.

Women entrepreneurship

Fourth, enable women to scale businesses. Women's entrepreneurship – a pathway for women to build wealth while having time flexibility – remains underfunded, with MSME allocations for women accounting for just 0.9% of the budget. Women own nearly 60% of India's unincorporated manufacturing enterprises, but only 4% of these enterprises are registered, and most of them are largely small, own-account enterprises concentrated in segments such as tailoring.

One way out is to give women access to a larger pool of funds – while 64% of Mudra loan accounts and 42% of disbursements are for women, they are overwhelmingly concentrated in Shishu loans (below ₹50,000) that are insufficient for building large-scale businesses. What is also needed is financial, digital, and technological enablement to help expand market access, skilling beyond traditional sectors, and supporting public infrastructure for safety, mobility and childcare. Relevant ministries should therefore introduce dedicated gender budget provisions to support scaling-up and transitioning into formal, growth-oriented businesses, as seen in several successful women-led textile firms.

Upskilling women

Fifth, prepare women for a digital and AI-driven future of work. A rapidly changing world of work shaped by artificial intelligence calls for targeted interventions to strengthen women's access to skill development and entrepreneurship by earmarking resources specifically for women, including AI-driven training and grants for mentorship programmes. The ₹660 crore gender allocation under the India AI Mission in 2025 – 33% of the total programme allocation – signals intent to include women in India's AI push. However, this commitment must deepen. Investments are needed in women-focused digital skilling, gender-sensitive algorithm designs, and AI-enabled gender programmes. Time-based metrics must ensure that upskilling replaces drudgery rather than adding to it.

Last, the 'Nari Shakti' narrative of the Budget must not be built on how much is spent in women's name, but on the extent to which women's time is freed, valued, and translated into agency, income, and opportunity.

Tanu M. Goyal is a Senior Fellow at the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations. Sharavni Prakash and Anjhana Ramesh are researchers with ICRIER's EPWD (Economic Policies for Women Led Development) Programme.

FROM THE ARCHIVES
The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO JANUARY 26, 1976

Decade of progress: Net national product doubled

New Delhi, Jan. 25: The country's economy has improved "impressively" in the past one year, according to an official review of a decade which, the review said, began dismally with a war-dislocated economy in 1965-66.

The official review lists as the dismal features of the time the 1965 war with Pakistan, stoppage of foreign aid, devaluation of the rupee and two consecutive monsoon failures which resulted in the worst famine of the century in Bihar and parts of eastern Uttar Pradesh.

The net national product stood at Rs. 20,600 millions when Mrs. Indira Gandhi took over as the Prime Minister. The per capita income at current prices was Rs. 426.

By 1973-74, the review says, the per capita income had doubled to Rs. 850. "We had a trade gap of Rs. 5,840 millions exports accounting for Rs. 8,100 millions and imports Rs. 13,940 millions.

By the beginning of 1975-76, the economic position had vastly improved. At current prices, the net national product had doubled and now stands at Rs. 49,300 millions.

The balance of payments position showed a foreign exchange reserve of Rs. 9,470 millions in 1973-74 compared to Rs. 2,980 millions in 1965-66.

The exports have shown a phenomenal increase, having gone up to Rs. 24,830 millions from Rs. 8,100 millions a decade back.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JANUARY 26, 1926

Forestry training in India

Delhi, Jan. 22: An effort has been made by the Government of India in the direction of enabling India to be self-contained in the matter of higher training in Forestry. I understand that the Department of Sir Mahomed Habibullah placed before the Standing Finance Committee detailed proposals of a scheme of Dehra Dun training which would eventually cost India one crore and twenty-five lakhs. The scheme was the result of more than four years' consultations with the Secretary of State because, it will be remembered that although Mr. Montagu, when he was Secretary of State, gave wholehearted support to the Government of India's proposal, the Imperial Forest Conference in London has been setting its face against it.

From Page One

Parties allege plot to exclude Assam voters

By the draft rolls published on December 27, Assam has 2.51 crore voters. While 4.78 lakh were marked dead from the previous rolls, 5.23 lakh were found shifted, and 53,619 multiple entries were deleted. The poll authorities claimed 100% verification covering more than 61 lakh households.

The Congress, Raijor Dal, Assam Jatiya Parishad, Communist Party of India, CPI (Marxist), and CPI (Marxist-Leninist), in their memorandum accused election officials at multiple levels of flouting statutory provisions under the Representation of the People Act, 1950; the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960; the Manual on Electoral Rolls, 2023; and specific Election Commission of India (EC) directives issued on November 17.

They said the electoral registration officers should have summarily rejected the objections without issuing notices, as it was "beyond belief" that so many voters could have died or shifted residence within a short span. Yet, notices without stating the grounds of objections were issued to the targeted voters in violation of Rule 17 of the Registration of Electoral Rules, 1960.

The parties alleged that a large number of fake objections was filed without the knowledge of the listed objectors.

'India a messenger of peace amid conflicts'

The President underlined India's long-standing commitment to peace, rooted in its spiritual and cultural traditions.

On national security, Ms. Murmu highlighted the success of Operation Sindoor, describing it as a demonstration of India's defence preparedness and self-reliance. "Last year, our country launched precision strikes against terror infrastructure through Operation Sindoor. Terror centres were destroyed, and many terrorists met their end. Our self-reliance in the field of defence powered the historic success of Operation Sindoor," she said.

Recalling her own interactions with the armed forces, the President referred to visits to the Siachen Base Camp and sorties in Sukhoi and Rafale aircraft, and aboard the submarine *INS Vaghsheer*. "Based on the strength of the Army, Air Force, and Navy, people have complete trust in our defence-preparedness," she said.

Referring to India's rapid economic ascent, the President noted that despite global uncertainty, the country had emerged as the world's fastest-growing major economy and was firmly on course to become the world's third-largest economy in the near future. This economic resilience, she said, reinforced India's ability to engage the world from a position of stability and credibility.

A significant portion of the address was devoted to women's empowerment, which the President described as central to India's journey towards becoming a developed nation by 2047. The rise of *nari shakti*, she said, was reshaping the country across sectors. "The active and empowered participation of women is extremely important for the development of the country," she said. From rural self-help groups to space, defence, sports, and entrepreneurship, women were breaking stereotypes, the President said. She noted that over 10 crore women were associated with self-help groups, while nearly 46% of representatives in Panchayati Raj institutions were women. The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, she added, would take political empowerment to "unprecedented heights".

Calling the past year a "golden chapter" for Indian women globally, Ms. Murmu cited achievements in sports, including India's success at the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup and the Blind Women's T20 World Cup. She also credited the *Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao* campaign with encouraging girls' education nationwide. "With increasing contribution by women, our country will set an example of an inclusive Republic based on gender equality," she said.

On social justice and welfare, the President highlighted progress in poverty alleviation, noting that millions had been lifted above the poverty line after decades of deprivation. Invoking the principle of Antyodaya, she said the focus was on ensuring that beneficiaries did not fall back into the "poverty trap". "No one should go hungry in our country," she said, noting that Central schemes currently supported nearly 81 crore people. Such efforts, she added, gave concrete shape to Mahatma Gandhi's ideal of Sarvodaya.

Ms. Murmu also announced that the Constitution was now available in all 22 languages listed in the Eighth Schedule, calling it a step towards fostering "constitutional nationalism". She said this initiative reflected a broader shift towards good governance based on trust, supported by technology, deregulation, and the removal of unnecessary compliance burdens.

Highlighting India's digital leadership, she said more than half of the world's digital transactions now took place in India, driven by unprecedented public participation that had transformed government programmes into mass movements.

Ms. Murmu spoke of cultural self-confidence and the effort to shed the "vestiges of colonial mindset". Emphasising self-reliance as both economic and cultural, she said renewed focus on Indian languages and indigenous knowledge systems was laying the foundation for a confident Viksit Bharat. Referring to the 150th anniversary of the composition of *Vande Mataram*, she said the song had transcended linguistic barriers during the freedom struggle. "

India, EU showing a fractured world another way to engage: von der Leyen

India and Europe have made a clear choice... strategic partnership, dialogue, and openness, says European Commission President; Antonio Costa says India and EU share responsibility to protect rules-based international order; the two leaders will be chief guests at the Republic Day celebrations

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar with European Council President Antonio Costa and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen during a meeting in New Delhi on Sunday. ANI

India and the European Union are giving a "fractured world" an alternative, said European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, even as the EU trade commissioner announced that negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) are "nearing conclusion" at the beginning of the EU delegation's visit to Delhi. While the FTA will be watched most closely, in terms of bilateral gains for both countries, it is the timing of the summit, amid unprecedented transatlantic tensions between the EU and the United States over territorial issues and trade, that is most significant.

"India and Europe have made a clear choice... strategic partnership, dialogue, and openness," she said in a social media post. We are showing a fractured world that another way is possible," she added.

The EU chief arrived in Delhi on Saturday, after a tense week at the World Economic Forum conference at Davos, where many European leaders sparred with U.S. President Donald Trump over his claims on Greenland and tariff threats. Prior to that, the EU leadership was in Paraguay to sign a major EU-MERCOSUR FTA between European and South American countries.

Both the European Commission President and EU Council President Antonio Costa were given a formal guard of honour at the Delhi airport on Sunday, and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar called on them in the evening to set the agenda for the next two days of intensive India-EU engagements, including at the Republic Day parade on Monday, and the EU-India Summit and a Business summit on Tuesday.

"India is a crucial partner for the EU. Together, we share the capacity and responsibility to protect the rules-based international order," Mr. Costa said.

Mr. Jaishankar also held talks with his counterpart, EU Vice-President/High Representative Kaja Kallas, and described the "growing comfort and strong convergences of the India-European Union partnership" in a post on social media. According to an EU statement, the two sides will adopt a joint EU-India comprehensive strategic agenda during the visit, addressing security and defence ties, trade, technology partnerships and connectivity issues.

They will also discuss global issues, including the "importance of an effective multilateral system, a free and prosperous Indo-Pacific region, Russia's war against Ukraine, [and] the situation in the Middle East (West Asia)," the statement added.

The strategic agreement is also significant as it will come days after the U.S. issued its latest Defense Strategy 2026, that considerably downplays ties with Europe and omits all mention of India.

'Nearing conclusion'

While the statement did not confirm the EU-India FTA, that has been under negotiation since 2007 and re-launched in 2022, was ready for signing on Tuesday, it said that the deal would boost bilateral trade and investment and "drive shared prosperity".

"I'm confident to say we're nearing the conclusion of our FTA negotiations. The cumulation of an intense past year," said Maros Sefcovic, stating this is his 10th ministerial engagement with Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal, who confirmed that the FTA talks were "closer to a fruitful outcome".

According to reports, the two sides have made more progress in the last few days on lowered tariffs and unprecedented market access to India for European companies, and technology cooperation and job opportunities for Indians, despite issues over areas like agricultural good, auto tariffs, and environmental taxes.

Mr. Costa and Ms. von der Leyen will attend India's 77th Republic Day celebrations as chief guests on Monday. They will also attend an "At Home" reception at the Rashtrapati Bhavan in the evening. Their summit with Prime Minister Narendra Modi will take place on Tuesday, followed by a business event.

The EU is India's largest trading partner in goods with bilateral trade topping $136 billion last year.

31 Central Bureau of Investigation officials awarded medals

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Thirty-one Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) officials have been awarded police medals on the occasion of the 77th Republic Day.

The President's Police Medal for Distinguished Service has been awarded to Chandrasekar Venupillai, Head of Zone (Delhi Zone); Superintendent of Police Amit Srivastava; Additional Superintendent of Police Mukesh Sharma; sub-inspector Pramod Kumar Yati; assistant sub-inspector Chaman Lal; and head constable Ramu Golla.

Among those awarded the Police Medal for Meritorious Service are Venkata Subba Reddy Chinnakondu, Head of Zone (Special Crime Zone); Deputy Inspector-General Sadanand Shankarrao Date; deputy legal adviser Manmohan Sharma; Additional SPs Baidyanath Samal and Kailash Sahu; Deputy SPs Rubi Choudhary, Manish Kumar Upadhyay, Anmol Sachan, Nishu Kushwaha, Arijit Sinha, Sharad Suresh Bhawar, Thahir Abbas P., and Dharmendra Kumar.

Inspector Dharmender; programmer Deepti Vashista; office superintendent Narikote Nandini; assistant sub-inspector Vinod Kumar; head constables Netram Chourasiya, Puran Mal Gujar, Bhola Roy, Babu Varghese, and Vikram Singh; and constables Sanjeev Kumar, Waikhom Rajesh Singh, and Rupendra Kumar have also been conferred the Police Medal for Meritorious Service.

Shubhanshu Shukla, who flew to space, gets Ashok Chakra

Saurabh Trivedi
NEW DELHI

Shubhanshu Shukla

On the eve of Republic Day, President Droupadi Murmu on Sunday approved the conferment of Gallantry and Distinguished Service Awards on personnel of the Indian Army, the Indian Navy, and the Indian Air Force, recognising acts of exceptional courage in operations and sustained distinguished service across key operational and command appointments.

Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla of the Indian Air Force has been honoured with the Ashok Chakra, the nation's highest peacetime gallantry award. The honour follows his ground-breaking mission to the International Space Station in June 2025.

In the Chakra series of gallantry awards, the President approved the conferment of one Ashok Chakra, three Kirti Chakras, and 12 Shaurya Chakras, including one Shaurya Chakra (posthumous). The gallantry awards include one Bar to Sena Medal (Gallantry) and 44 Sena Medals (Gallantry), of which five are posthumous. Additionally, six Nao Sena Medals (Gallantry) were awarded to Navy personnel and two Vayu Sena Medals (Gallantry) to Air Force personnel.

The President also approved a total of 301 military decorations to Armed Forces and other personnel. These include 30 Param Vishisht Seva Medals, four Uttam Yudh Seva Medals, 56 Ati Vishisht Seva Medals, nine Yudh Seva Medals, two Bars to Sena Medals (Distinguished), 43 Sena Medals (Distinguished), eight Nao Sena Medals (Distinguished), and 14 Vayu Sena Medals (Distinguished).

Further, 135 Vishisht Seva Medals and 98 Mention-in-Despatches were approved for personnel involved in various operations, including Operation Rakshak, Operation Snow Leopard, Operation Hifazat, Operation Orchid, and Operation Meghdoot, as well as rescue and casualty evacuation tasks. Of these, five mentions are posthumous, with 81 awards going to personnel of the Army.

982 police medals awarded on Republic Day

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

As many as 982 police personnel were awarded Gallantry and Service Medals on the occasion of Republic Day.

The Medal for Gallantry was awarded to 125 police personnel, which included 35 personnel from areas affected by Left Wing Extremism, 45 from the Jammu & Kashmir region, and five personnel from the northeast.

Out of 101 President's Medals for Distinguished Service, 89 have been awarded to the Police Service, five to the Fire Service, three to the Civil Defence and Home Guard Service, and four to the Correctional Service.

Meritorious Service

Out of 756 Medals for Meritorious Service, 664 have been awarded to the Police Service, 34 to the Fire Service, 33 to the Civil Defence and Home Guard Service, and 25 to the Correctional Service.

Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel have been awarded 13 Gallantry Medals, the highest among all Central Armed Police Forces.

The honours include one Shaurya Chakra and 12 Gallantry Medals, taking the cumulative tally of gallantry awards earned by the CRPF to 2,556 so far.

Assistant Commandant Vipin Wilson of 20 Battalion, CRPF was conferred the Shaurya Chakra for displaying extraordinary valour and exemplary courage in the line of duty.

On the occasion of Republic Day, 29 Central Industrial Security Force personnel were respectively awarded the President's Police Medal for Distinguished Service, Police Medal for Meritorious Service, and Fire Service Medal for Meritorious Service.

Inspector-General S.R. Sarvananan, Navajyoti Gogoi, and Pratibha Agarwal were conferred the Medal for Distinguished Service.

Actor Madhavan, ex-UGC chief among 113 Padma Shri awardees

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

R. Madhavan

The Centre on Sunday announced the names of 113 recipients of the Padma Shri, India's fourth-highest civilian award, for 2026.

Among the awardees are M. Jagadesh Kumar, former Chairman of the University Grants Commission; R.V.S. Mani, former Under Secretary of the Ministry of Home Affairs; Shashi Shekhar Vempati, former CEO of Prasar Bharati; and archaeologist Budha Krishna Mani, who led excavations in Ayodhya and Sarnath.

Aerospace scientist Chandramouli Gaddamanugu, who directed the Akash missile system from development to deployment during Operation Sindoor, and ISRO scientist A.E. Muthunayagam, who led the cryogenic propulsion system, have also been awarded the Padma Shri. Actors R. Madhavan, Prosenjit Chatterjee, Arvind Vaidya (known for *Sarabhai vs Sarabhai*), Anil Kumar Rastogi, and Gadde Babu Rajendra Prasad are also among the awardees.

The sportspersons recognised include cricketers Rohit Sharma, captain of India's T20 World Cup-winning team, and Harmanpreet Kaur, who led India to its first women's ODI World Cup victory, as well as hockey players Savita Punia and Baldev Singh, and para-athlete Praveen Kumar.

K. Vijay Kumar, the former CRPF D-G and chief of the STF that killed poacher Veerappan; Ramamurthy Sreedher, the founder of community radio in India; and Satyanarayan Nuwal, the founder of India's first licensed private defence company, which pioneered manufacturing of indigenous ammunition, have also been awarded the Padma Shri.

The award has also been given to Ashok Khade, a self-made entrepreneur from a Dalit cobbler family, who established a cutting-edge offshore fabrication company; Ashok Kumar Singh, an agriculture scientist who developed over 25 rice varieties; and Dalit author Asok Kumar Haldar, who wrote inspiring literature while being a railway guard.

Forty-five people were named under the "unsung heroes" category of the award.

Man arrested for murder of Professor at a Mumbai station

Press Trust of India
MUMBAI

An official said that the accused was identified and apprehended with the help of CCTV footage

The Government Railway Police (GRP) have arrested a 27-year-old daily-wage labourer in connection with the fatal stabbing of a Professor at a crowded railway station here within 12 hours of the crime, an official said on Sunday.

According to the Borivali GRP, the accused, Omkar Eknath Shinde, was apprehended from the Kurar area of the western suburb for the murder that took place on Saturday evening.

A minor argument between the victim, Alok Kumar Singh, a Professor with N.M. College, and Shinde while they were alighting from a local train escalated into a brutal attack, the official said.

Shinde, a labourer engaged in metal polishing work, stabbed Singh in the stomach on platform No. 1 of Malad railway station. He fled the scene, leaving the victim in a pool of blood.

Singh was immediately rushed to a hospital, where he was declared dead.

The accused took advantage of the crowd and escaped from the spot, but was identified and apprehended with the help of CCTV footage, the official said.

Shinde has been arrested under relevant Sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), and further investigation is under way, he added.

PM to visit Assam on February 14 for third time

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Assam on February 14 to inaugurate several projects and address Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) workers, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Sunday. This will be the Prime Minister's third visit to the poll-bound State in less than three months.

Mr. Sarma said that the Prime Minister would first inaugurate the Kumar Bhaskarvarman Bridge across the Brahmaputra before opening the temporary campus of the Indian Institute of Management, Guwahati, and handing over 100 Centre-funded electric buses to the State.

"Later in the day, the Prime Minister will address a meeting of our party functionaries," he said.

The Prime Minister may also visit eastern Assam's Dibrugarh, Mr. Sarma told presspersons after launching the BJP's video vans as part of a pre-poll outreach drive across the State.

Voting reflects citizens' faith in elections, says President

On National Voters' Day, President Murmu, Prime Minister speak on voting and democracy; Modi underscores the pivotal role of youth; Congress flags 'vote theft' and SIR as tarnishing democracy

Bindu Shajan Perappadan
NEW DELHI

The strength of our democracy lies not only in the sheer size of the electorate but also in the depth of the democratic spirit, President Droupadi Murmu said at the 16th National Voters' Day celebrations here on Sunday.

"Voting is not merely a political expression but also a reflection of citizens' faith in the democratic process of elections," she added.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi also extended his greetings to the nation on the occasion, highlighting the pivotal role of youth in shaping India's destiny.

In a letter to fellow citizens and youth, he encouraged young citizens to engage with the MYBharat portal.

The Prime Minister commended the "can do" spirit of India's youth, appreciating their proactive approach and their determination to actively participate in shaping outcomes rather than waiting for change to happen.

Shaping future: Young voters take a selfie on 16th National Voters' Day at Aryabhatta Auditorium, Ranchi University, on Sunday. ANI

Commemorating 75 years since the commencement of India's first general election in 1951, Mr. Modi described the electoral process as a "festival of democracy".

He underscored India's dual identity as the "world's largest democracy" and the "mother of democracy".

Specifically addressing Mera Yuva Bharat (MYBharat) volunteers, he urged them to celebrate first-time voters and create awareness of the power of voting.

"To be a voter is the greatest privilege and responsibility in a democracy. Voting is a sacred Constitutional right and a mark of participation in Bharat's future. The voter is the *bhagya vidhata* (dispenser of destiny) of our development journey. That indelible ink on a finger is a badge of honour that ensures our democracy remains vibrant and purposeful," he said.

Unplanned SIR: Cong.

In a social media post, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Sunday said National Voters' Day was a powerful reminder that a nation's future belongs to its people and that our collective voice can shape our shared destiny.

"The people deserve fair and fearless elections, where clean electoral rolls and a level-playing field are the primary requisite," Mr. Kharge said. Snatching the right to vote through "vote *chori* (theft)" and unplanned special intensive revision of electoral rolls tarnishes India's long-cherished democracy, he said.

"In recent times, our institutions like the Election Commission have faced sustained pressure. It is therefore our responsibility to protect their independence and integrity, so that democracy does not merely survive, but truly thrives," Mr. Kharge said.

Poll body working on BJP's behalf, 'torturing' people in the name of SIR: Mamata

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Sunday targeted the Election Commission (EC) and said that it was "torturing people in an unprecedented manner" in the name of special intensive revision (SIR).

The Chief Minister made these remarks on National Voters' Day, and alleged that "on behalf of the BJP, their master, they [the poll body] are busy in bulldozing the Opposition and destroying the foundation of Indian democracy" and "yet they have the guts to celebrate Voters' Day".

The Trinamool Congress chairperson said that more than 130 persons had died because of the SIR. "Can you summon, the way you are doing, persons above 85, 90, 95 years of age, and even physically challenged persons to appear before you to prove their credentials," she asked.

Flagging concerns: Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee says that more than 130 persons have died because of the SIR. FILE PHOTO

On January 23, Ms. Banerjee had put the 'death toll' due to SIR in West Bengal to 110. In a social media post, she said that "stress caused by this kind of illegal pressure is leading to a series of suicides and deaths, and yet you are continuing to do this at the behest of your political masters."

Ms. Banerjee said that the poll body has made the ongoing SIR an "NRC (National Register of Citizens) trial for citizens, including particularly those belonging to minorities, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes".

SIR hearing

On Sunday, the Trinamool Congress leadership held protests against the SIR across the State. In another development, State Minister Shashi Panja appeared for an SIR hearing. The Minister said that her name was on the 2002 voter list and she had submitted all the documents. Several MLAs and prominent persons had been given notice for hearings in Bengal.

Congress says right to vote being bulldozed, federalism a casualty

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Mallikarjun Kharge

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Sunday accused the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led Union government of systematically undermining democratic institutions and eroding the federal structure, warning that the "very foundations of the republic" were under strain as India marked the 77th anniversary of the adoption of its Constitution.

In his Republic Day message to the nation, posted on X, Mr. Kharge said the right to vote – "a strong pillar of democracy" – was being "bulldozed", while federalism had become a casualty of the ruling party's "double-engine" governance model, which he alleged was being used to disadvantage Opposition-ruled States.

"The Constitutional rights of crores of MGNREGA workers are under attack, livelihoods are being snatched away, and panchayats are being weakened at the grassroots," Mr. Kharge said, alleging that the rights-based social welfare framework built over decades was being dismantled through "instant diktats".

He paid homage to the architects of the Indian Constitution, including Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, B.R. Ambedkar, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, and members of the Constituent Assembly, for crafting a document that embodied the aspirations of a diverse nation.

He also expressed gratitude to the armed forces, paramilitary personnel, scientists, teachers, farmers, and daily wage workers, describing them as the backbone of the country's progress. However, he said, these very sections were bearing the brunt of policy failures and corruption.

Citing reports of the Comptroller and Auditor General, Mr. Kharge alleged large-scale irregularities in flagship government schemes. He claimed that 41% of cards under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana were found to be fraudulent, with another 34% under investigation, while corruption levels in the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana were as high as 94%.

Public infrastructure was crumbling, with bridges collapsing and roads deteriorating across the country, and urban living conditions had worsened despite the promise of "smart cities", he alleged. "Health infrastructure has collapsed and healthcare is no longer affordable," he said.

Calling upon citizens to defend Constitutional values, Mr. Kharge said the time had come to stand firmly for "justice, liberty, equality and fraternity". Safeguarding the Constitution, he said, would be the truest tribute to the sacrifices of India's freedom fighters.

Muslims safer than ever in India, says AIUDF chief

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

Maulana Badruddin Ajmal, former MP and All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) chief, on Sunday said Muslims in the country were safer than ever before because Hindus stood with them.

He dismissed narratives about a sense of insecurity among Muslims, and played down Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's remarks against Bengali Muslims, but urged members of the minority community to unite against the BJP.

"Let him [Chief Minister] keep shouting "miya, miya". Such ranting will not affect the resolve of the community," Mr. Ajmal told presspersons in Guwahati.

He advised Muslims in Assam not to extend electoral support to the BJP in the upcoming election. "Not a single Muslim should vote for the BJP. If anyone does, it will be a misfortune for our community," he said.

However, he acknowledged that dislodging the BJP would be an uphill task because of a "tacit understanding" between the party and the Congress.

He said the AIUDF was ready to withdraw from contesting the election if it would help the Congress win. "But the Congress wants the BJP to be back in power. It is giving the BJP a 100% walkover," he said.

"I doubt if the Congress can manage to win 23 seats [out of 126 in Assam]. It will not be in a position to form the government," he said, accusing the party of "playing a dirty game" with the minorities.

Tejashwi Yadav named national working president of RJD in Patna

Amit Bhelari
PATNA

Tejashwi Yadav was named national working president of the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) in the presence of his father and party supremo, Lalu Prasad, mother Rabri Devi, and eldest sister Misa Bharti.

The announcement was made on Sunday during the national executive meeting held at a hotel in Patna. Mr. Prasad presented Mr. Yadav with the certificate appointing him as the working president.

The 36-year-old leader was already one of the party's most prominent faces and, with the responsibility of the organisation, his role has now become even more significant. Last year, in January, when the national executive meeting was held in Patna, a resolution was passed empowering Mr. Yadav with authority equivalent to that of the RJD national president. Mr. Yadav, who was already taking key decisions in the party, has now been given an official post to lead the organisation. RJD insiders said the decision was taken keeping in view Mr. Prasad's health condition.

RJD leader and former Bihar Chief Minister Lalu Prasad presents the party certificate to Tejashwi Yadav. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Mr. Yadav, who is currently the Leader of the Opposition in the Bihar Legislative Assembly, had also served as Deputy Chief Minister when the party formed the government with the Janata Dal (United) in 2015 and 2022.

After the formal announcement, Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Yadav said, "He [Tejashwi] has been given an important post and he will take the party ahead under the guidance of all the senior leaders. After the Budget session, the party will make a strategy and our leader will continue to raise public issues."

Mr. Yadav's elevation comes after the party's poor performance in the recently concluded Assembly election.

'Will not surrender'

"Either bow down to Narendra Modi or fight with him. Uncle [referring to Nitish Kumar] has already bowed down, but we will not surrender," Mr. Yadav said.

"I will try my level best to regain national party status for the RJD. For this, I would visit other States and also speak with leaders of other political parties across the country who are opposed to the BJP, in order to launch a strong campaign against the BJP at the national level," he added.

Aajeevika Mission a revolution, says Chouhan

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Union Minister for Rural Development, Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Sunday said the Aajeevika Mission had grown beyond a government programme to become a "revolution and a movement", driven by the economic and social empowerment of women in self-help groups (SHGs).

Lauding the work of SHG members, Mr. Chouhan said the women had demonstrated remarkable strength and resilience.

Mr. Chouhan reiterated the Centre's target of creating three crore '*Lakhpati Didis*', calling it "a mantra" that would be achieved soon.

Nearly 10 crore women were currently associated with SHGs, he noted.

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA-DEPARTMENT OF SPACE
CONSTRUCTION & MAINTENANCE GROUP, SDSC –SHAR
SRIHARIKOTA-524124

Brief E-TENDER NOTICE

e-Tender Notice No.CMG/C/CON/258724_258725 **Date: 22/01/2026**

On behalf of President of India, Item Rate tenders are invited through e-tendering for the following works:

Sl. No.	Brief Name of work	Est.Value (Rs)
1	Improvement to strom water drains at PHC Housing colonies, SDSC SHAR.	33 Lakhs
2	Improvement to storm water drains at Housing colonies, Sullurpeta.	102 Lakhs

Last date for sale (Tender documents can be downloaded) up to **03/02/2026**, **14:30 hrs**. For eligibility criteria and other details, interested tenderers may please refer to the detailed bilingual (Hindi-English) Notice Inviting Tenders (NIT) on the website **https://www.isro.gov.in/Tenders.html** and tender free view at **https://www.tenderwizard.com/isro**.

Sd/- GROUP HEAD, CMG/ SDSC SHAR

Chennai Petroleum Corporation Limited
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Website: www.cpcl.co.in; Email id: shankarp@cpcl.co.in
Tel: 044-24349833 / 24346807
CIN - L40101TN1965GOI005389

EXTRACT OF THE STATEMENT OF AUDITED STANDALONE AND CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE QUARTER AND NINE MONTHS ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2025 (₹ in crore)

Sl. No.	Particulars	STANDALONE						CONSOLIDATED					
		QUARTER ENDED			NINE MONTHS ENDED		YEAR ENDED	THREE MONTHS ENDED			NINE MONTHS ENDED		YEAR ENDED
		31.12.2025	30.09.2025	31.12.2024	31.12.2025	31.12.2024	31.03.2025	31.12.2025	30.09.2025	31.12.2024	31.12.2025	31.12.2024	31.03.2025
		Audited	Audited	Audited	Audited	Audited	Audited	Audited	Audited	Unaudited	Audited	Unaudited	Audited
1	Total income from operations	19467.40	20069.09	15687.64	58229.10	50500.45	71093.43	19467.40	20039.86	15687.64	58200.00	50482.20	71075.19
2	**Net Profit / (Loss) for the period (before Tax, Exceptional and/or** Extraordinary items)	1317.03	994.29	14.12	2231.22	(373.61)	208.10	1331.40	981.93	24.44	2249.92	(353.01)	248.66
3	Net Profit / (Loss) for the period before tax (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	1317.03	994.29	14.12	2231.22	(373.61)	208.10	1331.40	981.93	24.44	2249.92	(353.01)	248.66
4	Net Profit / (Loss) for the period after tax (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	987.22	731.55	10.46	1662.15	(276.43)	173.53	1001.59	719.19	20.78	1680.85	(255.83)	214.09
5	Total Comprehensive Income for the period [Comprising Profit / (Loss) for the period (after tax) and Other Comprehensive Income (after tax)]	991.13	739.67	11.75	1680.81	(282.70)	164.55	1005.50	727.31	22.07	1699.51	(262.10)	204.74
6	Paid up Equity Share Capital (Face Value - ₹ 10 each)	148.91	148.91	148.91	148.91	148.91	148.91	148.91	148.91	148.91	148.91	148.91	148.91
7	Reserves (excluding Revaluation Reserve)				9145.90	7578.82	7539.55				9432.76	7791.26	7807.70
8	Securities Premium Account				250.04	250.04	250.04				250.04	250.04	250.04
9	Networth				9544.85	7977.77	7938.50				9831.71	8190.21	8206.65
10	Paid up Debt Captial / Outstanding Debt (Bonds / Debentures) excluding Outstanding Redeemable Preference Shares				-	810.00	810.00				-	810.00	810.00
11	Outstanding Redeemable Preference Shares (2025: Nil (2024:50,00,00,000) Non-Convertible Cumulative Redeemable Preference Shares of ₹ 10 each) (Not listed)				-	500.00	500.00				-	500.00	500.00
12	Debt Equity Ratio	0.27	0.22	0.76	0.27	0.76	0.39	0.26	0.22	0.74	0.26	0.74	0.38
13	Earnings Per Share (of ₹. 10/- each) (for continuing and discontinued operations)												
	(i) Basic (₹ / share)	66.30	49.13	0.70	111.62	(18.56)	11.65	67.26	48.30	1.40	112.88	(17.18)	14.38
	(ii) Diluted (₹ / share)	66.30	49.13	0.70	111.62	(18.56)	11.65	67.26	48.30	1.40	112.88	(17.18)	14.38

Note:
1 The above is an extract of the detailed format of Quarterly Financial Results filed with the Stock Exchanges under Regulation 33 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the Financial Results are available on the Stock Exchange websites: www.bseindia.com and www.nseindia.com. The same is also available on the company's website www.cpcl.co.in
2 For the other items of the Listing Regulations, pertinent disclosures have been made to stock exchanges (BSE and NSE) and can be accessed on www.bseindia.com and www.nseindia.com

BY ORDER OF THE BOARD

Place : Chennai
Date : January 24, 2026

Rohit Kumar Agrawala
Director (Finance)
DIN: 10048961

INBRIEF

Indian Navy squadron boosts maritime ties with Indonesia

Boosting maritime engagement with Indonesia, a key member of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), and advancing the vision of MAHASAGAR, the Indian Navy's First Training Squadron (1TS) departed Belawan on Friday, after a successful three-day port call. According to the Defence Ministry, during the visit, the crew and trainees of *INS Tir*, *INS Shardul*, *INS Sujata*, and *ICGS Sarathi* engaged extensively with the Indonesian Navy, strengthening professional cooperation and people-to-people ties. The engagements encompassed professional interactions, training visits, cultural exchanges, and friendly sports meets, fostering mutual understanding and camaraderie between the two maritime forces. Professional engagements included visits by Indian naval trainees to facilities of Naval Regional Command I, offering them insights into the operational roles and responsibilities of the Command.

Veteran journalist and author Mark Tully passes away at 90

Kallol Bhattacherjee
NEW DELHI

Veteran journalist and acclaimed author Mark Tully passed away in a hospital in Delhi on Sunday. He was 90.

Mr. Tully had served as the chief of bureau in India of the British Broadcasting Corporation for 22 years. After ending his stint in radio broadcasting, he turned to documentary filmmaking and wrote multiple books on India.

Mr. Tully once said that working at the BBC for decades had made him a household name in South Asia, but had also quietly changed his style of writing. "For some reason, I would stop writing after typing 300 words," he recalled at a book launch at the British Council, explaining that writing one word extra was discouraged as it would go against the norm of news writing for the radio. Yet for Mr. Tully, irrespective of the medium, it was always the story that was the most important. And the story that fascinated him most was that of modern, Independent India.

Early life

Mark Tully was born in Calcutta (now Kolkata) in 1935 to William Scarth Carlisle Tully and Patience Trebi. His father was a senior partner at a trading agency. As the world was rocked by the Quit India movement, communal violence, and the Second World War, Mr. Tully at home was being moulded by the ethos of the fading Raj.

He returned to India in the early 1960s as an assistant representative at the BBC's New Delhi bureau. Though as a child, he had seen Indian festivals such as Kartik Purnima in Puri and Durga Puja in Kolkata, he was shaped by his childhood and education in the U.K. That's why, often in his conversations with friends, he loved referring to himself as a "relic of the Raj".

MARK TULLY (1935-2026)

His BBC career was challenging from the outset. In the 1960s, Akashvani ruled the airwaves. Despite the hardships and government pressure, the BBC, under Mr. Tully, carved out its space by covering the 1965 India-Pakistan War, the 1971 Liberation War of Bangladesh, the Emergency of 1975, and the insurgency in Punjab in the early 1980s. Coverage of these landmark events gave Tully a front-row seat to history.

In December 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. As Soviet tanks rolled in, foreign news agencies left Afghanistan. Mr. Tully and his intrepid colleague Satish Jacob started waiting outside the arrival terminal of the New Delhi International Airport and putting together news stories on the situation in Afghanistan by interviewing passengers who arrived on Kabul-Delhi flights. It was during these encounters that they discovered that Murtaza Bhutto, the elder son of Pakistan's murdered Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, was making frequent visits to India in the hope of getting support from Indira Gandhi as he plotted revenge against Pakistan's military government led by General Zia ul Haq. Later, Mr. Tully and Jacob met Murtaza at a central Delhi hotel, sharing a conversation.

Mark Tully legends

Delhi's journalistic fraternity is rich with legends about Mr. Tully. One such episode from the Emergency was recounted by Mr. Tully himself in his book *India's Unending Journey*.

Hours after Indira Gandhi imposed Emergency, rumour spread that Mr. Tully had broadcast on the BBC that a senior Minister had resigned in protest and that other Cabinet members were under house arrest. Information and Broadcasting Minister Inder Kumar Gujral received an order from "Indira Gandhi's inner circle", saying, "Send for Mark Tully, pull down his trousers, give him a few lashes, and send him to jail." Gujral later told Mr. Tully that he declined the order, saying imprisoning people was the Home Minister's job, not his.

Gujral checked the reports of the government and found Mr. Tully had read out no such report.

Knighted in 2002 and awarded the Padma Bhushan in 2005, Mr. Tully was a familiar face at the Press Club of India and India International Centre – always available for a quick conversation, be it on Mother Teresa or Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. These were the qualities that helped Mr. Tully transcend from being the BBC chief of bureau to become the "voice of India".

Webinar on evolving career pathways in biotechnology held

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Biotechnology is emerging as a key driver of Industry 5.0, the next evolution of industrialisation, with growing opportunities across healthcare, sustainable materials, diagnostics, education, and environmental solutions, experts said on Sunday at a webinar titled "Careers in biotechnology: What you need to know".

The session was jointly organised by the Vellore Institute of Technology, Chennai, and *The Hindu* as part of the VIT-Chennai's initiative on "Biotechnology: Role in Industry 5.0 – sustainable future pathways", aimed at helping students and early career professionals navigate evolving opportunities in biotechnology.

Setting the context, G. Jayaraman, professor and dean, School of Bio Sciences and Technology, VIT-Chennai, spoke about how biotechnology education is being aligned with Industry 5.0. He highlighted the range of opportunities available to students at VIT.

Speaking on industry-aligned research careers, P.R. Yashavanth, assistant professor, School of Bio Sciences and Technology, VIT-Chennai, emphasised curiosity as the key driver for students entering the field.

"Curiosity is what sustains a long-term career in biotechnology...," Professor Yashavanth said.

Venkata Krishna Bayineni, senior researcher and lead, Science Education Research at Prayoga Institute of Education Research, Bengaluru, spoke about interdisciplinary research and alternative career pathways in science.

J.N. Nidhya, founder of Spotdot Bioinnovations Private Limited, and alumna of VIT, spoke about her experience setting up a biotechnology start-up focused on point-of-care diagnostics.

"Moving an idea from the lab to the field requires patience, persistence, and a clear understanding of the problem you are trying to solve," Ms. Nidhya said.

The session can be viewed here: *https://newsth.live/THVITBTY*

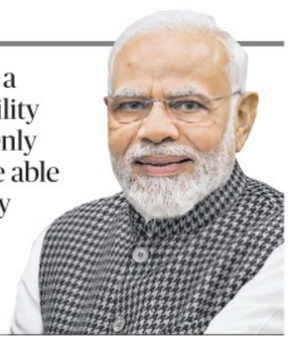
Indian products should offer top quality: Modi

In *Mann Ki Baat* address, Prime Minister says world is watching India's economic progress, and country has become third-largest start-up ecosystem globally in sectors such as AI, semiconductor

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday urged all manufacturing sectors, including start-ups, to focus on "quality" and make "excellence" their benchmark, stating this would only help accelerate the journey towards a "Viksit Bharat (Developed India)".

> We all shoulder a huge responsibility to emphasise quality... Only by doing this shall we be able to accelerate the journey towards a Viksit Bharat
>
> **NARENDRA MODI**
> Prime Minister



During his *Mann Ki Baat* address, Mr. Modi said the world was watching India's economy progress. "At such a juncture, we all shoulder a huge responsibility to emphasise quality... the connotation of an Indian product should become 'top quality'. I had expressed from Red Fort - 'Zero Defect Zero Effect'. Only by doing this shall we be able to accelerate the journey towards a 'Viksit Bharat'," he said.

Mr. Modi said the country had now become the third largest start-up ecosystem in the world, involving sectors such as artificial intelligence, nuclear energy, semiconductors, mobility, green hydrogen, and biotechnology. "I salute all my young friends who are associated with one start-up or the other or want to start one of their own," the Prime Minister said.

Stating that people across the country were coming up with innovative solutions, Mr. Modi said that in Azamgarh, Uttar Pradesh, the local people cleaned the Tamsa river, which crosses Ayodhya and merges with the Ganga, and planted fruit trees along its banks. In Anantapur, Andhra Pradesh, which grappled with drought, people revived more than 10 reservoirs and planted over 7,000 trees.

A day ahead of Republic Day, he said the occasion was an opportunity to pay homage to the founding fathers of the Indian Constitution. "Today is National Voters' Day... a voter is the soul of democracy," he said, acknowledging the contributions of all those people in the country who were involved in the electoral process and work at the grassroots level to keep the country's democracy vibrant. He urged the youngsters turning 18 to register themselves as voters.

Mr. Modi spoke about the emerging trend of "bhajan clubbing" in different cities across the country, noting that today's generation had incorporated the spirit of devotion in their lifestyles.

"Today our culture and festivals are making their mark across the world... our Bharatvanshis, brothers and sisters of Indian origin, play a vital role in maintaining cultural vibrancy... our Indian community in Malaysia is also doing commendable work in this regard," he said, adding that there were over 500 Tamil schools in Malaysia and, along with Telugu and Punjabi, there was also a lot of focus on other Indian languages.

The Prime Minister underscored the unique tradition of community kitchen in Chandanki village of Beharaji, Gujarat, continuing for the past 15 years. A tiffin service is also available for the unwell. "In many countries, such family systems are highly respected. Just a few days ago, my brother, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE, visited India. He conveyed to me that the UAE is celebrating 2026 as the Year of the Family," he said.

Mr. Modi spoke about the importance of millets in reference to the efforts of farmers in Tamil Nadu's Kallakurichi and Ramsar in Rajasthan. About 800 women farmers are associated with the Periyapalayam Millet FPC in Kallakurichi. Over 900 in Ramsar are associated with the Ramsar Organic Farmer Producer Company, primarily cultivating pearl millet which is processed to prepare ready-to-eat laddus.

Brinda Karat calls for national movement to restore MGNREGA

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Brinda Karat

Brinda Karat, senior Communist Party of India (Marxist) leader and founding member of the All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA), on Sunday urged women's organisations to intensify their struggle against the Bharatiya Janata Party-Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh combine, calling it the biggest threat to the country, particularly to women.

Addressing a public meeting at Bus Bhavan Grounds here, Ms. Karat slammed the Union government for the Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin), or VB-G RAM G, Act, and called for a sustained nationwide movement to restore the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). She stressed the MGNREGA's role in providing livelihood security to crores of rural poor, especially women.

Problems women face

Accusing the BJP and RSS of never having accepted the Indian Constitution, Ms. Karat claimed that their ideological goal was to impose the *Manusmriti*, which she said institutionalised discrimination against women. Referring to the 77th anniversary of the adoption of the Constitution, she remarked that while Prime Minister Narendra Modi would salute the National Fag at India Gate, his salute was not to the Constitution but to the RSS ideology.

Ms. Karat also underlined the need to continue resisting "imperialist, capitalist and *Manuvadi* forces" that perpetuated injustice and discrimination against women. AIDWA national president P.K. Sreemathi announced that they would discuss the problems and challenges faced by women in the country.

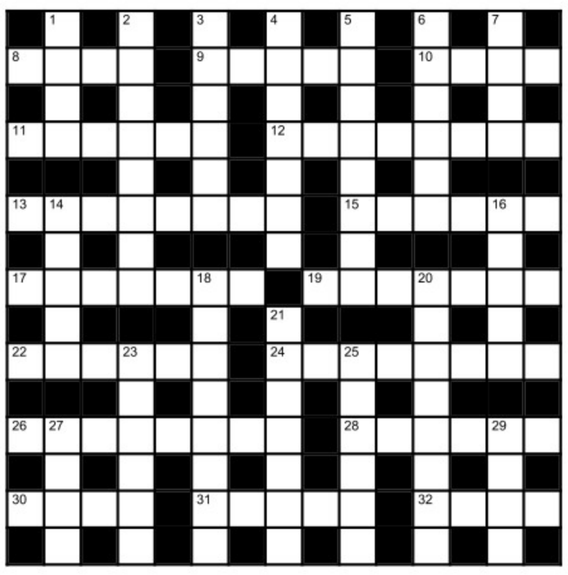
AIDWA national conference committee chairperson Shanta Sinha, actor M. Rohini, AIDWA general secretary Mariam Dhawale, and others addressed the session.

TH CROSSWORD + 14700

(set by Incognito)

Solve this puzzle online and access more puzzles at *https://thehindu.com/crosswords*

SCAN TO PLAY



Across

8 Alight in Jalandhar (4)
9 Model leaves bathroom fitting for new president at one time (5)
10 State: Everyone can see hat spinning (4)
11 Deer milling about church go back (6)
12 Military officer's issue? (4,4)
13 Article with editor expressed opposition (8)
15 Bone in possession of leaders of the ancient lawmen of the tribe (6)
17 Alternatively, wrongly detains (7)
19 Go ahead with poster on American vice-president (7)
22 Demand American forks are destroyed (3,3)
24 State: Ship with an elite special force (8)
26 Boast about friend Hector (8)
28 Scared artificial intelligence is spreading across French Academy and starting to dominate (6)
30 Prohibit going around mid-afternoon to produce husk (4)
31 Dance for actor playing Hans Lada (5)
32 Old silver with senior journalist (4)

Down

1 Garden implement from Thrippunithura, Kerala (4)
2 At this time at this place with book's follower (8)
3 A hollow boast about the French becoming most fit (6)
4 Wrongly discard identification documents (2,5)
5 Excited tailless creature with Theodore (8)
6 Silent bachelor at one city (6)
7 Beat a monk (4)
14 Wedding announcement from bachelor fixed on northern poles (5)
16 Air conditioned car crashed in city (5)
18 Employees in planes giving extraordinary war cries (8)
20 Unusual moral ban, perhaps (8)
21 Called up ex Nepalese PM for getting floor decoration (7)
23 Musk, perhaps, is hidden in outskirts of Faraday... That's a crime! (6)
25 Pale Zulu in Karnataka gets currency (6)
27 City in Anantnag ravine (4)
29 Cold dice rolled (4)

SUDOKU

6	3		8	1		9		
	8						7	
9				5				
		4	1			7		8
			5		6			
3		6			8	1		
				7				5
	7						4	
		2		8	5		3	7

No.SS6772 Distribution: www.knightfeatures.com

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

Solution to previous puzzle

	B	D		O		A		E		B		U		
R	E	N	O		D	Y	L	A	N		U	R	N	S
	D		C		E		L		V		F		D	
P	I	N	U	P	S		O	V	E	R	F	L	O	W
			M		S		W		L		E			
S	T	E	E	R	A	G	E		O	R	D	E	A	L
	O		N				D		P			M		
G	A	T	T	I	N	G		B	E	L	O	V	E	D
	S				I		S				R		E	
I	T	A	L	I	C		P	L	U	M	B	E	R	S
			I		O		A		N		I			
S	K	E	L	E	T	O	N		E	N	T	E	R	S
	Y		I		I		I	A			I		A	
M	A	R	E		N	E	S	T	S		N	U	N	S
	T		S		E		H		E		G		G	

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

8	4	1	2	5	3	9	7	6
5	9	7	4	6	1	2	8	3
3	2	6	7	8	9	1	4	5
4	8	5	1	3	6	7	2	9
2	1	9	8	7	5	6	3	4
7	6	3	9	2	4	5	1	8
1	3	8	6	9	2	4	5	7
6	7	2	5	4	8	3	9	1
9	5	4	3	1	7	8	6	2

FAITH

Relevance of acharyas

Faith is everything. When it is constant and unshakable, a person can achieve the ultimate goal in life. Our acharyas are the ones who keep us steadfast in our ways in the world and by surrendering to them, we can reach Vaikuntam, said Tirukkudanthai Dr. Venkatesh.

When Nathamuni, the acharya who came after Nammazhwar, set about to discover the lost works of acharyas that came to be codified as Divya Prabhandam and referred to as Tamil vedam, he was told to recite the 11 verses starting with Kanninun Siruthambu 12,000 times, after which Nammazhwar would definitely manifest in front of him. While others wondered how Nathamuni would keep track of the count (to 12,000) while focused on recitation, the great acharya said he was confident that Nammazhwar would make his presence felt when he completed reciting the required number. True to his faith, Nammazhwar appeared to him and presented 4,000 verses (not merely 1,000 verses as expected by Nathamuni). He also presented Nathamuni with the *bhavishya acharya* statuette (signifying a future preceptor, who would protect the faith and lead mankind towards Perumal). This *bhavishya acharya* was none other than Ramanuja, who did yeomen service to the ordinary people, regardless of their status in life, by showing them that Perumal was accessible to all.

One may wonder how acharyas are relevant in seeking God, and if one cannot attain His *thiruvadi* (feet) on one's own? Nathamuni delivered the famous '*Kulappadi mazhai*' verse to his sishya Uyyakondar. As per tradition, the verse was handed down by successive acharyas to their sishyas.

A useful cover with 'hidden' flaws

COVERNOTE

Real advantages such as reduced waiting periods aside, group policies exist only because your bank or retirees' association has chosen to tie up with an insurer

K. Nitya Kalyani

Last weekend was full of festivities and meet-ups. One of them - a pleasant lunch for the extended family organised by an outgoing cousin - turned into a happy reunion with aunts and uncles, cousins, and their children and grandchildren.

Since I tend to be asked insurance questions everywhere, it was no surprise when a cousin asked whether I could suggest a group hospitalisation policy for all these family members.

Regrettably, the answer was no. A group policy can be issued only to members of an existing organisation that has not been formed solely for taking insurance cover, and a family, however large, is not a formal organisation. This group of 40 also cannot be covered under a family policy as it defines family members by closeness and financial dependence. They usually restrict coverage to self and spouse, two dependent children, and parents or parents-in-law.

Another cousin said he had signed up for a group policy offered by the bank he has an account with. It had a healthy sum insured and a reasonable premium. As a retiree, he was relieved, since obtaining hospitalisation insurance at that stage of life can be difficult. This was good to hear. However, I had to caution him that group policies are good – until they aren't. From an individual's point of view, signing up is usually easy. Often, there is no initial health check-up, waiting periods may be waived or reduced, and sub-limits for room rent and similar expenses are not imposed.

These are real advantages that are hard to negotiate in an individual policy. There is also reasonable flexibility in choosing the sum insured, and there is an organisation of your affiliation - the bank, club or association - that handles policy administration, whether at issuance, renewal or at the time of claims.

But there are disadvantages too. The policy exists only because your bank, club, alumni association or retirees' association has chosen to tie up with an insurer and enroll its members. Its continuation is neither assured nor within your control.

This can put you at a disadvantage if the policy is discontinued, and this is something that has happened often. A few years ago, when several banks were merged, many such group policies for account holders simply vanished, with no reasonable replacement. Many group policies also do not allow members to convert their cover into an individual policy.

The solution is to hold an individual policy alongside. It may sound redundant, but even a small policy provides limited protection and, importantly, creates a track record. If the group policy ceases, the individual policy can be enhanced.

The same issue arises with employer-provided group policies. What happens when you retire and the cover ends? I have helped a retiring relative obtain an individual policy with credit for pre-existing disease waiting periods, by citing continuous coverage under the employer's policy over several years and the absence of claims. This works only in specific circumstances and requires persistence. It also helps if the policy is taken from the same insurer. One way or another, remember this: group policies are excellent – up to a point.

(The writer is a business journalist specialising in insurance & corporate history)

Send queries on personal finance and investing to the moneywise@thehindu.co.in ID. Our experts in personal finance will respond to select queries, but will not give specific recommendations for investment in a particular mutual fund, share or fixed deposit.

Cautious gait: Volatility risk is well known, but that is usually less dangerous. GETTYIMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Under-estimated risks in retirement planning

Retirees should have something in liquid funds or bank deposits in the initial years to address sequence risk; senior citizens should have some equity in the portfolio, relatively on the lower side

FUTURE PERFECT

Joydeep Sen

> Fixed income or debt is relatively less risky, as returns are more stable than equity. Ensure proper balance between equity and debt in the investment portfolio

> Set aside one to three years' worth of living expenses in safe, liquid assets like bank deposits. This buffer allows you to cover expenses during market downturns

Retirees fear market volatility, and volatility is a risk flagged by financial planners, provided you are taking professional inputs. However, volatility risk is not as dangerous – we will discuss why. The bigger risks are (a) Sequence-of-returns risk (a potent one) (b) Longevity risk (living too long) and (c) Inflation risk (the silent destroyer). We will also look at how to address these risks.

Volatility risk

Returns from market-based investments are not like a bank deposit, it does not move in a straight line. When you are checking your portfolio report, one fine morning, your returns may look much lower than when you last checked it.

In this context, equity is a high-risk asset i.e. volatility is relatively higher. Fixed income or debt is relatively less risky, as returns are more stable than equity. It is advisable that retirees do a proper balance between equity and debt in the investment portfolio, and this approach is well known.

Sequence risk

Sequence risk, also known as sequence of returns risk, is the danger that experiencing poor investment returns in the early years of retirement, combined with ongoing portfolio withdrawals for living expenses, will significantly increase the chance of running out of money prematurely. This risk is particularly impactful during the first five to 10 years of retirement because withdrawals may lead to sale of assets at lower than principal prices (i.e. at a loss), permanently reducing the principal available to benefit from potential future market recoveries.

In the accumulation phase (working years), market downturns can be an opportunity to buy assets at lower prices (rupee-cost averaging).

In retirement, the dynamic reverses; withdrawals during a bear market leads to "rupee-cost ravaging," where more shares are sold to meet the required cash flow, making it difficult for the portfolio to recover.

Two retirees with the same starting portfolio and the same average annual return over 30 years can have vastly different outcomes based purely on the order in which those returns occur.

The one who experiences losses in the first five years is at a much higher risk of portfolio depletion and may run out of money. How to deal with sequencing risk?

Build a cash reserve/ bucket strategy: Set aside one to three years' worth of living expenses in safe, liquid assets like Bank Deposits or Liquid Funds. This buffer allows you to cover expenses during market downturns without selling investments at a loss, giving the portfolio time to recover.

Longevity risk

A retired person may have an approach "I don't want to die with unused money." If your children are well settled and earning well, you need not leave a legacy from your hard-earned money. However, longevity risk is outliving your capital i.e. savings kitty. Longevity risk is growing because of (a) rising life expectancy (b) better healthcare and (c) your spouse may live longer.

How to deal with longevity risk? When you are planning for the golden phase of your life – while doing the excel calculations – put a number higher than you are likely to live.

Why retirees underestimate inflation risk? Inflation feels low year-to-year - it is measured as how much prices went up over one year, but compounds brutally over decades. Medical inflation often exceeds headline consumer inflation. Fixed pensions lose relevance over time due to inflation. For a perspective, if inflation rate is say 5% per year, purchasing power will halve in approximately 14 years. The calculation is simple: divide 72 by the inflation number you have in mind. How to deal with it? Need not over-prepare, this is inevitable. However, your allocation to equity, debt, gold etc., should be appropriate as per your risk appetite and objectives.

Tips for retirees

Take care of these aspects in retirement planning – Bucketed or layered portfolios: near-term expenses in low volatility assets (e.g. Liquid Funds/ Debt Funds) and growth assets (e.g. equity) untouched during bad years; Lower initial withdrawal expectations: 3.5-4.5% instead of rule-of-thumb 6-7% per year. You should have something in liquid funds or bank deposits in the initial years, to address sequence risk.

Have some equity in the portfolio, relatively on the lower side since you are a senior citizen now, for the long term. It is an inflation hedge, not a growth luxury.

(Joydeep Sen is a corporate trainer (financial markets) and author)

Investing for high priority goals

THINKINVESTOR

You should keep your equity allocation in high priority goals to less than 50%, reducing it to under 30% in the last five years of the time horizon for the goal.

Venkatesh Bangaruswamy

Asset allocation is the most important decision in your investment process. This refers to the proportion of your annual savings that you invest in different asset classes to achieve your goals. In this article, we discuss why your asset allocation must be based on how important a goal is for you.

Managing risk

You must first decide which one of your goals will rank as high priority. This is not necessarily a goal that has the shortest time horizon. Rather, it is the goal that cannot be postponed. For most parents, funding their child's college education can be considered as high priority goal. This is the goal that you must achieve with minimal risk. Note that risk in this case is the failure to accumulate the amount required at the end of the time horizon to achieve the goal. In other words, risk is the likelihood of a shortfall in terminal wealth relating to that goal. Goal-based portfolios will typically have two asset classes- equity and bonds. Also, diversification in such a portfolio will be based on the source of returns – equity for capital appreciation and bonds for income returns. So, ignoring the low credit risk on bond asset class (bank deposits), the shortfall risk in goal-based portfolios arises from your equity investments. That means your high priority goal must have more bonds and less equity compared with other goals of the same time horizon. Because the post-tax returns on bonds are significantly lower than that of equity, it is not optimal to have multiple high priority goals! You should keep your equity allocation in high priority goal to less than 50%, reducing it to under 30% in the last five years of the goal's time horizon.

Conclusion

Despite best efforts, it is possible that your high priority goal faces shortfall in terminal wealth. There are several ways to bridge the shortfall. One, you can transfer some money from your longest-horizon portfolio to the portfolio earmarked for the high priority goal. For most individuals in their mid-career, this would be their retirement portfolio. You should not transfer money from the portfolio earmarked for high priority goal to a lower priority goal that has a shorter time horizon. Two, you can borrow money to bridge the gap and achieve the goal. And three, if you have generated handsome returns in your trading portfolio, you could transfer some to the high priority goal.

(The author offers training programmes for individuals to manage their personal investments)

Personal Loans

Rates and Charges		Loan amount 5 lakh Tenure 5 years	Loan amount 1 lakh Tenure 5 years	(% of loan amount)
Name of Lender	**Interest Rate (%)**	**EMI (Rs)**	**EMI (Rs)**	**Processing fee**
HDFC Bank	9.99 onwards	10,621 onwards	2,124 onwards	Up to Rs 6,500
Tata Capital	10.99 onwards	10,869 onwards	2,174 onwards	Up to 3.5%
State Bank of India	10.05-15.05	10,636-11,908	2,127-2,382	NIL till 31st january 2026
ICICI Bank	9.99 onwards	10,621 onwards	2,124 onwards	Up to 2%
Bank of Baroda*	10.15-18.05	10,660-12,710	2,132-2,542	Up to 2% (Max. Rs 10,000)
Axis Bank	9.50 onwards	10,501 onwards	2,100 onwards	Up to 2%
Kotak Mahindra Bank	10.99 onwards	10,869 onwards	2,174 onwards	Up to 5%
Bank of India	10.85-16.15	10,834-12,199	2,167-2,440	Up to 1% (Min. Rs 250; Max. Rs 15,000)
Canara Bank	9.70-15.15	10,550-11.934	2,110-2,387	0.50% (Rs 1,000 - Rs 5,000)
Punjab National Bank	10.25-16.80	10,685-12,373	2,137-2,475	Up to 1%
HSBC Bank	9.95 onwards	10,611 onwards	2,122 onwards	Up to 2%
Federal Bank	11.99 onwards	11,120 onwards	2,224 onwards	Up to 3%
Union Bank of India	8.75 - 12.55	10,319-11,262	2,064-2,252	Up to 1% (Max. Rs 7,500)
Bajaj Finserv	10.00-30.00	10,624-16,177	2,125-3,235	Up to 3.93%
Punjab & Sind Bank	9.60-13.85	10,525-11,595	2,105-2,319	0.50%-1%
Indian Overseas Bank	10.25 onwards	10,685 onwards	2,137 onwards	Up to 0.75%
UCO Bank	9.95 - 13.20	10,611-11,428	2,122-2,286	Up to 1% (Min. Rs 750)
IDFC FIRST Bank	9.99 onwards	10,621 onwards	2,124 onwards	1.5%
Bank of Maharashtra	8.75-13.55	10,319-11,518	2,064-2,304	Up to 1% (Max. Rs 10,000)
Central Bank of India	9.65-11.55	10,538-11,009	2,108-2,202	Up to 1%
IndusInd Bank	10.49 onwards	10,744 onwards	2,149 onwards	Up to 3.5% (2% for instant personal loans for limited period)

*Interest concession of 0.10% to customers opting for group credit life insurance.

Car Loans

Rates and Charges		Loan amount 5 lakh Tenure 5 years	(% of loan amount)
Name of Lender	**Interest Rate (%)**	**EMI (Rs)**	**Processing fee**
Union Bank of India	7.40-9.45	9,995 - 10,489	Up to Rs 1,000
Punjab National Bank	7.55-9.45	10,031 - 10,489	Up to 0.25% (Rs. 1,000 - Rs. 1,500)
Bank of Baroda	7.90 - 11.35	10,114 - 10,959	Up to Rs. 2,000
Canara Bank	7.45-11.45	10,007 - 10,984	0.25% (Rs 1,000 - Rs 5,000)
Bank of India	7.60-12.55	10,043 - 11,262	Up to 0.25% (Rs. 2,500 - Rs. 10,000)
UCO Bank	7.35-10.00	9,983 - 10,624	0.5% (Max. Rs 5,000)
State Bank of India	8.7	10,307	Rs 750 - Rs 1,500
Bank of Maharashtra*	7.45-11.75	10,007 - 11,059	NIL
Indian Overseas Bank	7.55-12.00	10,031 - 11,122	0.50% (Rs 500 - Rs 5,000)
ICICI Bank	8.50 onwards	10,258 onwards	Up to 2%
HDFC Bank	8.20 onwards	10,186 onwards	Up to 0.5% (Rs. 3,500 - Rs. 8,000)
Karnataka Bank	8.00-11.50	10,138 - 10,996	Up to 0.60% (Rs. 2,500 - Rs. 11,000)
Federal Bank	10.00 onwards	10,624 onwards	Rs. 2,000 - Rs. 4,500
Punjab and Sind Bank**	7.50-14.00	10,019 - 11,634	0.25% (Rs. 1,000 - Rs. 15,000)
Indian Bank	7.50-9.55	10,019 - 10,513	Rs. 1,000
IDFC FIRST Bank	9.99 onwards	10,621 onwards	Up to Rs. 10,000
Central Bank of India	7.60-9.20	10,043 - 10,428	No processing fees till 31.03.2026

*0.25% interest rate concession for home loan borrowers, customers with 6 months relationship with bank
**Concession of up to 50% on processing fee for PSB Apna Vahan Sugam.

Rates and charges as on January 21 **Source: Paisabazaar.com**

PARIS

Son of Iranian President calls for lifting of restrictions on Internet

REUTERS

Yousef Pezeshkian, son of Iran's President, who is also a government adviser, called for Internet connectivity to be restored, warning the more than two-week blackout would exacerbate anti-government sentiment. Over 90 million people have been cut off from the Internet since January 8 amid major protests. AFP

MANDALAY

Myanmar junta wraps final phase of polls with ally set to seal victory

AFP

Voting ended in Myanmar's month-long election, with the dominant pro-military party on course for landslide victory in a junta-run poll critics say will prolong the Army's grip on power. The election's third and final phase closed on Sunday, after voting took place across the country, just a week shy of the coup's five-year anniversary. AFP

DAMASCUS

Syria, Kurds extend truce to allow transfer of Islamic State detainees

AFP

Syria's government and Kurdish forces on Saturday extended their truce by 15 days, with Damascus saying it was to support the U.S. transfer of Islamic State detainees from Syria to Iraq. The SDF also confirmed the extension, saying it was reached "after international mediation, while dialogue with Damascus continues". AFP

ISLAMABAD

Foreign Ministers of Bangladesh, Pakistan seek to strengthen ties

AFP

Pakistan Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and his Bangladeshi counterpart Mohammad Touhid Hossain reviewed bilateral relations and reaffirmed their commitment to build trade and economic cooperation, and to strengthen collaboration across multiple sectors in a telephonic conversation on Sunday. PTI

Anger spills onto Minneapolis streets over second killing by federal agents

Man who was shot was a U.S. citizen; Homeland Security says agents fired in defence; videos appear to contradict federal officials' version; Governor demands end to immigration operation as Trump says local leaders are inciting insurrection

Reuters
MINNEAPOLIS

U.S. immigration agents shot and killed a U.S. citizen in Minneapolis on Saturday, officials said, sparking fierce protests and condemnations from local leaders in the second such incident this month.

The Department of Homeland Security characterised the incident as an attack, saying a Border Patrol agent fired in self-defense.

But bystander videos from the scene verified by *Reuters* showed the man, identified as 37-year-old Alex Pretti, holding a phone in his hand, not a gun, as he tries to help other protesters who have been pushed to the ground by agents. Videos show Pretti being forced onto his hands and knees by several agents. Moments later, an officer with a handgun pointed at Pretti's back fires four shots at him in quick succession.

Vigil meet: People mourn at a makeshift memorial in the area where a man was shot dead by federal agents in Minneapolis. AFP

The shooting of Pretti, an intensive care nurse, drew hundreds of protesters to the neighbourhood to confront the armed and masked agents, who deployed tear gas and flash-bang grenades. Demonstrations also broke out in New York, Washington D.C. and San Francisco, among other cities.

State-Federal rift

It also raised tensions between State and federal officials, already at odds with the Trump administration over the shooting of another U.S. citizen, Renee Good, on January 7.

Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem told reporters the man killed on Saturday had attacked agents on an immigration raid, though she did not say whether he pulled out his weapon.

Minnesota Governor Tim Walz, questioned that account. "I've seen the video from several angles and it's sickening," Mr. Walz said. "The federal government cannot be trusted to lead this investigation - the State will handle it."

Meanwhile, President Donald Trump accused local elected officials of stirring up opposition. "The Mayor and the Governor are inciting Insurrection, with their pompous, dangerous, and arrogant rhetoric," Mr. Trump wrote on social media.

The shooting came one day after more than 10,000 people took to the streets to protest the immigration crackdown.

China's top General accused of undermining party line

Press Trust of India
BEIJING

The mouthpiece of the Chinese military, *PLA Daily*, has accused top military official Zhang Youxia and senior General Liu Zhenli of threatening the Communist Party's absolute leadership over the armed forces as one of the reasons why they were placed under investigation.

They have severely fuelled political and corruption problems that threaten the Communist Party's absolute leadership over the armed forces and undermine the party's governance foundation, an editorial in *People's Daily* said on Sunday.

The two senior Chinese military officials were placed under investigation for serious violations of the ruling Communist Party's discipline and laws, the Defence Ministry said on Saturday.

Zhang Youxia

The charge of threatening the party's absolute leadership is regarded as "very serious" as the Chinese military functioned under the command of the Communist Party of China (CPC), which exercises absolute control of the armed forces.

Ever since he took over the leadership in 2012, President Xi Jinping, 72, who also heads the party, the military besides the presidency has been emphasising that it is imperative for the military to function under the party leadership.

Observers say the emphasis of party loyalty also means endorsing his absolute leadership as he has been declared as the core leader of the party and action against Mr. Zhang 75, came as Mr. Xi may regard the top general undermining his leadership.

Unlike the other generals, Mr. Zhang is the first-ranking Vice Chairman of the powerful Central Military Commission (CMC), the overall high command of the Chinese military headed by Mr. Xi. Mr. Zhang's position on the CMC makes him the highest-ranking officer in the Chinese military.

Venezuela's interim leader seeks dialogue with Opposition

Agence France-Presse
CARACAS

Venezuela's Interim President Delcy Rodriguez called on Saturday for discussions with the Opposition to reach "agreements" for peace, three weeks after the U.S. ouster of her former boss, Nicolas Maduro.

"There can be no political or partisan differences when it comes to peace in Venezuela," Ms. Rodriguez said on state television. "Despite our differences, we must speak to each other with respect. Despite our differences, we must come together and reach agreements," she added.

Ms. Rodriguez was a former Vice-President and long-time insider in Venezuela's authoritarian and anti-American government, before changing tack as Interim President.

Meanwhile, the country hopes to boost oil production by at least 18% this year through reforms that will fully open the sector to private investors, the head of the state oil giant PDVSA said.

'Shocked' and 'aggrieved' over Hasina press event in Delhi, says Bangladesh

Kallol Bhattacherjee
NEW DELHI

Two days after deposed Awami League of Bangladesh shared audio messages by former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at a press event in Delhi, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh said the event had "shocked" and "surprised" the people of Bangladesh.

"The Government and the people of Bangladesh are surprised and shocked that fugitive Sheikh Hasina, who has been convicted by the International Crimes Tribunal for committing crimes against humanity, was allowed to make a statement at a public event in New Delhi on 23rd January," said the Foreign Ministry in its statement.

Sheikh Hasina delivers a speech via an audio played by panellists at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of South Asia in New Delhi. ANI

Several Awami League leaders spoke at the event titled "Save democracy in Bangladesh", where two statements in English and Bengali by Ms. Hasina were shared with media persons. Ms. Hasina has been staying in an undisclosed location in India since fleeing Bangladesh in 2024.

The Foreign Ministry said that Bangladesh was "deeply aggrieved" by the event, saying "allowing" the event to go ahead was "contrary to the norms of inter-state relations".

"It sets a dangerous precedent vis-à-vis the future of Bangladesh-India relations and may seriously impair the ability of the future elected polity in Bangladesh to engage, shape and nurture mutually beneficial bilateral relations," said the Ministry.

Russia claims capture of another village in Ukraine's Kharkiv

Reuters
MOSCOW

The Russian Defence Ministry said on Saturday its forces had completed the takeover of the village of Starytsya in Ukraine's Kharkiv region.

The village is near the town of Vovchansk, close to the Ukraine-Russia border, where Russian forces launched an incursion in May 2024.

Moscow's troops have in recent months tried to extend gains in the area despite Ukrainian resistance. The General Staff of Ukraine's military, in a report on Saturday, said Russian forces had launched six attacks on an area including Starytsya.

The Russian Defence Ministry report said Moscow's troops had also carried out a massive strike overnight on Ukrainian long-range drone sites and energy facilities.

Russian forces have been engaged in a slow drive westward through southeastern Ukraine. Most of its gains have been in the Donetsk region.

Sport

Alcaraz, Sabalenka enter last eight; Djokovic advances without hitting a ball

AUSTRALIAN OPEN

Agencies
MELBOURNE

Carlos Alcaraz powered into the Australian Open quarterfinals on Sunday and Novak Djokovic joined him without hitting a ball, as the next generation roared.

Aryna Sabalenka surged through but Coco Gauff was forced to fight at Melbourne Park, where temperatures eased to 22C after the brutal heat of a day earlier.

Top seed Alcaraz was in ominous touch at Rod Laver Arena, dismissing the American Tommy Paul 7-6 (6), 6-4, 7-5 in a masterclass. The 22-year-old plays home hope and sixth seed Alex de Minaur, who defeated 10th seed Alexander Bublik in straight sets.

Djokovic, chasing a record 25th Grand Slam crown, was scheduled to face Jakub Mensik in the last 16 on Monday but the Czech player pulled out injured.

Djokovic will face American ninth seed Taylor Fritz or the fifth seed Lorenzo Musetti of Italy for a place in the semifinals.

Alcaraz, who is yet to drop a set at this year's tournament, has never gone beyond the quarterfinals in Melbourne. If he can finally break his Australian duck he will become the youngest man in history to win a career Grand Slam.

Alexander Zverev, well beaten by Jannik Sinner in last year's final, plays Learner Tien of the United States next. Germany's third seed demolished Argentina's 18th seed Francisco Cerundolo in straight sets. The 25th seed Tien ran out a surprisingly easy three-set winner over three-time finalist Daniil Medvedev.

World No. 1 Sabalenka will face impressive 18-year-old American Iva Jovic in a tasty last-eight encounter.

Brave challenge

Belarusian top seed Sabalenka, a two-time champion here, opened the day on Rod Laver Arena and saw off the brave challenge of 19-year-old Canadian Victoria Mboko.

Sabalenka won 6-1, 7-6 (1) while Jovic destroyed unseeded Yulia Putintseva 6-0, 6-1 in just 53 dominant minutes.

"What an incredible player for such a young age," said Sabalenka of the 17th-seeded Canadian Mboko. "She pushed me really hard today and played incredible tennis."

Jovic is the youngest player to reach the women's quarterfinals at the Australian Open without dropping a set since Venus Williams in 1998.

Third-seeded American Gauff faces Ukraine's Elina Svitolina in the quarterfinals. Gauff dropped a set for the second match in a row before clawing her way past Karolina Muchova 6-1, 3-6, 6-3.

The 21-year-old Gauff, a two-time major champion, has never gone beyond the last four at Melbourne Park.

India's singles challenge at the junior Australian Open ended in a matter of hours with Maaya Rajeshwaran Ravathi and Arnav Paparkar losing their respective opening round. Maaya struggled to find her rhythm against Anna Pushkareva and went down 4-6, 1-6,while in boys' singles, Arnav lost 3-6, 4-6 against American Vihan Reddy.

THE RESULTS

Fourth round: Men: 1-Alcaraz (Esp) bt 19-Paul (USA) 7-6(6), 6-4, 7-5; 6-de Minaur (Aus) bt 10-Bublik (Kaz) 6-4, 6-1, 6-1; 3-Zverev (Ger) bt 18-Cerundolo (Arg) 6-2, 6-4, 6-4; 25-Tien (USA) bt 11-Medvedev (Rus) 6-4, 6-0, 6-3;
Women: 1-Sabalenka (Blr) bt 17-Mboko (Can) 6-1, 7-6(1); 29-Jovic (USA) bt Putintseva (Kaz) 6-0, 6-1; 3-Gauff (USA) bt 19-Muchova (Cze) 6-1, 3-6, 6-3; 12-Svitolina (Ukr) bt 8-Andreeva (Rus) 6-2, 6-4.

MOMENT OF BRILLIANCE

Hardik pulls off a stunner to send Conway packing

RITU RAJ KONWAR

Hardik Pandya pulled off an acrobatic catch to provide India the perfect start against New Zealand in the third T20I at Guwahati. Opener Devon Conway danced down the pitch off Harshit Rana's bowling and tried to clear the infield. However, Hardik plucked the ball out of thin air with a diving effort at mid-off.

BACK WITH A BANG

Leggie Bishnoi makes a roaring return with an impressive spell

RITU RAJ KONWAR

Ravi Bishnoi, playing after nearly a year, starred on his comeback to set up India's big win. About the areas he worked on during his time away from the game, Bishnoi said: "I focused on my line and length, targeting the five- and six-metre lengths. It was an area I felt I had to focus. I was excited and nervous playing this match".

PEGGED BACK

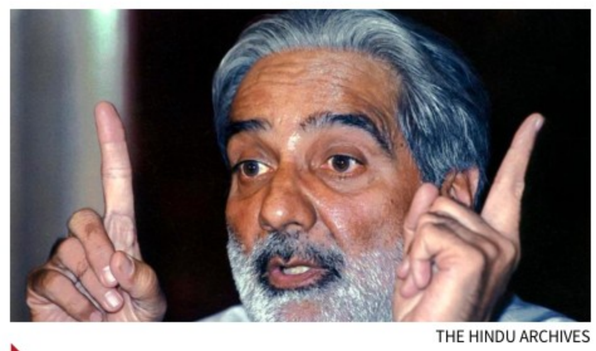
Losing three wickets in the PowerPlay wasn't ideal: Chapman

RITU RAJ KONWAR

New Zealand's Mark Chapman said the game was lost in the PowerPlay in which his side managed just 36 for three. "Losing three wickets in the PowerPlay wasn't ideal. But you also have to credit the Indian bowlers in the way they tied us down. India have played very good cricket."

END OF AN ERA

Former BCCI president Bindra passes away at the age of 84



THE HINDU ARCHIVES

Former BCCI president Inderjit Singh Bindra, who played a big role in ushering in a new era of cricket marketing, passed away in New Delhi on Sunday. He was 84. He is survived by a son and daughter. Bindra served as BCCI president from 1993 to 1996, and was also the president of the Punjab Cricket Association (1978 to 2014).

After the Bs sting Kiwis, Abhishek takes over

Bumrah and Bishnoi deliver telling spells to restrict the visitors; the belligerent opener, in the company of skipper Suryakumar, then propels the Men in Blue home with 10 overs to spare

NZ IN INDIA

S. Dipak Ragav
GUWAHATI

Whenever a team is on a roll, almost every change it makes seems to click. For the third T20I against New Zealand at the ACA Stadium here on Sunday, India gave leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi a chance by resting its trump card Varun Chakaravarthy.

No sign of rust

Playing his first international game in nearly a year, the 25-year-old showed no signs of rust as he delivered a superb spell of two for 18 and, alongside the imperious Jasprit Bumrah (three for 17), ensured the Men in Blue restricted the Black Caps to 153 for nine.

After the bowlers beat the eggs and baked the cake, the Indian batters just had to apply the icing and place the cherry on top.

Abhishek Sharma (68 n.o., 20b, 7x4, 5x6) and skipper Suryakumar Yadav (57 n.o., 26b, 6x4, 3x6) did just that while also gobbling the pastry in a flash.

The duo clobbered a hapless Kiwi attack all over the park and chased down the target in just 10 overs as the hosts scripted a sensational eight-wicket win to secure their ninth consecutive T20I series win.

While Sanju Samson was dismissed off the first ball of the chase, Ishan Kishan and Abhishek quickly extinguished any faint hopes the Kiwis might have entertained.

Kishan smashed Matt Henry on the leg-side for two sixes and a four in the first over to set the ball rolling. Abhishek then took over, belting out his best hits.

It was an all-out onslaught – from bludgeoning strokes on the leg-side to audacious sliced shots and clean drives down the ground – that left Mitchell Santner's men shell-shocked.

Second-fastest fifty

When he launched Jacob Duffy over square-leg for his fourth maximum, Abhishek posted the second-fastest half-century by an Indian (14 balls). Suryakumar, who has finally found his touch during this series, slammed another unbeaten half-century to seal the issue in style.

Earlier, after the Kiwis were put in, things started going downhill from the very first over as Harshit Rana dismissed Devon Conway for the fifth time on this tour. It was a sign of things to come.

Most of the New Zealand batters struggled with their timing and kept getting caught in the deep.

Bishnoi tied down Mark Chapman and Glenn Phillips, both of them failing to even rotate the strike. At the other end, Bumrah was at his absolute best, giving no inches, as the Kiwis meandered to a sub-par total.

Abhishek, Kishan and Suryakumar then lit up the Sunday night.

The orchestrators: Bumrah and Abhishek were at their characteristic best as India sealed the series with an emphatic win. RITU RAJ KONWAR

Suryakumar... swinging it India's way again. RITU RAJ KONWAR

SCOREBOARD

NEW ZEALAND
Devon Conway c Hardik b Harshit 1 *(2b)*, Tim Seifert b Bumrah 12 *(11b, 1x4)*, Rachin Ravindra c Bishnoi b Hardik 4 *(5b, 1x4)*, Glenn Phillips c Kishan b Bishnoi 48 *(40b, 6x4, 1x6)*, Mark Chapman c Samson b Bishnoi 32 *(23b, 2x4, 2x6)*, Daryl Mitchell c Kishan b Hardik 14 *(8b, 1x4, 1x6)*, Mitchell Santner c Abhishek b Bumrah 27 *(17b, 3x4, 1x6)*, Kyle Jamieson b Bumrah 3 *(5b)*, Matt Henry run out 1 *(1b)*, Ish Sodhi (not out) 2 *(5b)*, Jacob Duffy (not out) 4 *(3b)*; Extras (lb-4, w-1): 5; Total (for nine wkts. in 20 overs): 153.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-2 (Conway, 0.3 overs), 2-13 (Rachin, 1.4), 3-34 (Seifert, 5.1), 4-86 (Chapman, 11.6), 5-112 (Mitchell, 14.4), 6-112 (Phillips, 15.1), 7-132 (Jamieson, 17.2), 8-134 (Henry, 17.4), 9-144 (Santner, 19.1).

INDIA BOWLING
Harshit 4-0-35-1, Hardik 3-0-23-2, Bishnoi 4-0-18-2, Bumrah 4-0-17-3, Kuldeep 3-0-32-0, Dube 2-0-24-0.

INDIA
Sanju Samson b Henry 0 *(1b)*, Abhishek Sharma (not out) 68 *(20b, 7x4, 5x6)*, Ishan Kishan c Chapman b Sodhi 28 *(13b, 3x4, 2x6)*, Suryakumar Yadav (not out) 57 *(26b, 6x4, 3x6)*; Extras (w-2): 2; Total (for two wkts. in 10 overs): 155.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-0 (Samson, 0.1), 2-53 (Kishan, 3.2).

NEW ZEALAND BOWLING
Henry 2-0-28-1, Duffy 2-0-38-0, Jamieson 1-0-17-0, Sodhi 2-0-28-1, Santner 2-0-28-0, Phillips 1-0-16-0.

Toss: India; **PoM:** Bumrah.
India won by eight wickets with 10 overs remaining to take an unassailable 3-0 lead in five-match series.
Fourth T20I: January 28, Visakhapatnam, 7 p.m.

Thought my chance with India had gone, says Bharti

WPL-4

Vivek Krishnan
VADODARA

For much of the past seven years, Bharti Fulmali had abandoned hopes of a recall into the Indian women's cricket team. Having played two T20Is against England at home in 2019, the middle-order batter from Amravati thought her chance at the highest level had come and gone.

When she came in at No. 6 in Guwahati in March 2019, India needed 25 runs from 29 deliveries for a seemingly routine victory. Bharti, then aged 24, meandered to five off 13 balls, and was dismissed with two balls remaining in a one-run loss.

By virtue of her cameos for Gujarat Giants in the Women's Premier League, where she has taken on the role of a six-hitter, the 31-year-old has been drafted into India's T20I squad for the tour of Australia in February.

"Yeah, I thought my chance to play for India had gone. I didn't think I would be making my comeback. The age factor was also there. But I am very grateful to get the opportunity," Bharti told *The Hindu* on Sunday.

After her brief, indifferent stint with India, the onset of the Covid pandemic in 2020 prompted Bharti to consider quitting cricket altogether.

"I did think about it," she said. "I was blamed when I played for India for the team's loss. I felt for a whole year that I was responsible. I started looking for jobs because I had no income. But then, I thought that I should just play well for my State even if I don't make it again to the highest level, and that was a new beginning."

Six-hitter Bharti in action. EMMANUAL YOGINI

Today's match
RCB vs MUMBAI INDIANS
Vadodara, 7.30 p.m.
HEAD-TO-HEAD
Played: 8
RCB 4 | MI 4
LIVE ON STAR SPORTS 1 & JIOHOTSTAR

Vijay Amritraj honoured with Padma Bhushan; Rohit and Harmanpreet awarded Padma Shri

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Tennis legend Vijay Amritraj, World Cup-winning captains Rohit Sharma and Harmanpreet Kaur were among the sportspersons honoured with the Padma Awards that were announced on Sunday.

Amritraj was honoured with the Padma Bhushan, the third highest civilian award, for his pioneering role in putting Indian tennis on the global map during the amateur and early Open Era. Amritraj had received the Padma Shri in 1983 and the Arjuna Award in 1974.

"At this stage of my career, being conferred the award is an honour and a profound blessing.

It represents recognition of my life's journey. For me, the National Flag and the National Anthem stand above everything else. I accept the honour with the deepest humility and gratitude," said a grateful Amritraj to *The Hindu*.

Rohit, who guided India to the T20 World Cup in 2024 and the Champions Trophy in 2025, and the 2025 ODI Women's World Cup-winning skipper Harmanpreet were among several sportspersons named for the Padma Shri, India's fourth-highest civilian honour. Other sportspersons honoured with the Padma Shri include Paralympic gold medal-winning high-jumper Praveen Kumar, Indian women's hockey goalkeeper Savita Punia, veteran hockey coach Baldev Singh, and silambam exponent K. Pajanivel.

Former wrestling coach Vladimer Mestvirishvili of Georgia, who had trained Olympic medal winners Yogeshwar Dutt and Bajrang Punia, was awarded the Padma Shri posthumously.

Recognising excellence: Amritraj, Rohit, Harmanpreet, Savita and Praveen. FILE PHOTOS: R. RAGU, VIJAY SONEJI, K.R. DEEPAK, BISWARANJAN ROUT, GETTY IMAGES

Manchester United dents Arsenal's title bid

EURO LEAGUES

Agence France-Presse
LONDON

Manchester United dealt a blow to Arsenal's Premier League title charge as Matheus Cunha's superb strike clinched a thrilling 3-2 win over the leader on Sunday.

Lisandro Martinez's own goal put Arsenal ahead at the Emirates Stadium, but Bryan Mbeumo equalised before half-time.

Patrick Dorgu's brilliant blast gave United the lead after the interval, but Mikel Merino's late leveller looked to have rescued a point for Arsenal until Cunha's sublime effort three minutes from full-time.

Aston Villa won 2-0 at Newcastle to draw level with Manchester City on 46 points, four points behind the Gunners.

Barcelona reclaimed top spot in LaLiga with a 3-0 win over Real Oviedo on Sunday, thanks to goals from Dani Olmo, Raphinha and an acrobatic Lamine Yamal effort.

The results: Premier League: Brentford 0 lost to Nottingham Forest 2 (Igor Jesus 12, Awoniyi 79); Crystal Palace 1 (Richards 88) lost to Chelsea 3 (Estevao 34, Joao Pedro 50, Fernandez 64-pen); Newcastle United 0 lost to Aston Villa 2 (Buendia 19, Watkins 88); Arsenal 2 (Martínez 29-og, Merino 84) lost to Manchester United 3 (Mbeumo 37, Dorgu 50, Cunha 87).
LaLiga: Atletico Madrid 3 (Sorloth 22, Lopez 75-og, Almada 87) bt Mallorca 0; Barcelona 3 (Olmo 52, Raphinha 57, Yamal 73) bt Real Oviedo 0.
Serie A: Atalanta 4 (Scamacca 15-pen, de Roon 24, Raspadori 73, Krstovic 90+2) bt Parma 0.
Bundesliga: Borussia M'Gladbach 0 lost to Stuttgart 3 (Leweling 30, Scally 67-og, Undav 74).
On Saturday: Premier League: Bournemouth 3 (Evanilson 26, Jimenez 33, Adli 90+5) bt Liverpool 2 (Van Dijk 45, Szoboszlai 80).
LaLiga: Sevilla 2 (Peque 42, Adams 56-pen) bt Athletic Bilbao 1 (Navarro 40); Villarreal 0 lost to Real Madrid 2 (Mbappe 47, 90+4-pen).
Serie A: Como 6 (Douvikas 8, 66, Baturina 16, Da Cunha 59-pen, Kuehn 70, Caqueret 76) bt Torino 0.
Bundesliga: Union Berlin 0 lost to Borussia Dortmund 3 (Can 10-pen, Schlotterbeck 53, Beier 84).

Boon's 'trick powers Royals into the final

HIL - MEN

Y.B. Sarangi
BHUBANESWAR

Ranchi Royals' captain Tom Boon celebrated his 36th birthday in style as he performed a hat-trick and orchestrated Hyderabad Toofans' thrilling 3-2 win in Qualifier 2 in the Hockey India League at the Kalinga Stadium here on Sunday. Royals will meet Vedanta Kalinga Lancers in the final on Monday.

Toofans seized the initiative with a strike in the fifth minute. The agile Rajinder Singh entered from the right and perfectly passed the ball to an unmarked Jacob Anderson, who completed the formalities.

Royals and their enterprising forwards did not have to wait for long for the equaliser. A second penalty corner got converted into a penalty stroke and Boon sent goalkeeper Jean-Paul Danneberg the wrong way to make it 1-1 in the 13th minute. At the stroke of the first quarter, Boon's deceptive, low flick off a penalty corner put Royals ahead.

Early on in the second half, Boon shot through the first rusher's legs to find the mark expertly to complete a hat-trick.

With Michel Struthoff and Zach Wallace playing crucial roles, Toofans' doggedness got them three penalty corners and Amandeep Ekka closed the gap with an effortless conversion.

Toofans, who missed Struthoff for most of the fourth quarter due to an injury, pulled out Dannerberg with more than three minutes left, but to no avail.

The result: Ranchi Royals 3 (Tom Boon 13-ps, 15-pc, 34-pc) bt Hyderabad Toofans 2 (Jacob Anderson 5, Amandeep Ekka 38-pc).

Strike force: Boon did the star turn for Royals. BISWARANJAN ROUT

INBRIEF

Conti named Indian U-17 women's football head coach

Former Italy international Pamela Conti was on Sunday named head coach of the Indian women's U-17 team to take charge of the AFC Asian Cup campaign later this year. The AIFF said the 43-year-old Conti has joined the training camp in Anantapur, where the Young Tigresses are preparing for the continental tournament. "Assistant coach Vincenzo Conti will also join the India U-17 women's team."Nivetha Ramadoss will continue as assistant coach.

Anahat loses to Watanabe in second round in New York

Japanese world No. 7 Satomi Watanabe beat Anahat Singh 6-11, 6-11, 11-2, 11-8, 11-6 in the second round of the Sprott Tournament of Champions squash in New York.

Owen Coyle returns as Jamshedpur FC coach

Indian Super League (ISL) club Jamshedpur FC has re-appointed England's Owen Coyle as head coach on a two-season contract. Coyle's return marks a significant move for the club, with the coach being widely remembered for delivering one of the most memorable campaigns in Jamshedpur FC's history. Under his guidance, Jamshedpur topped the league in 2021-22 with 43 points, scoring 43 goals and conceding 23, to clinch the club's first ISL League Winners' Shield.

Randhir Singh's tenure as OCA chief to end

Randhir Singh's tenure as Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) president will come to a premature end as his ill-health necessitated the election of a new head of the body in Tashkent on Monday.

LIVE TELECAST

Men's U-19 World Cup: SS Select 2 & JioHotstar, 1 p.m.
Australian Open: Sony Sports Ten 2, 3, 5 & LIV, 1.30 p.m. & 5.30 a.m. (Tuesday)
HIL: Sony Sports Ten 1 & LIV, 5 & 7.30 p.m.
WPL: Star Sports 1 & JioHotstar, 7.30 p.m.
Serie A: DAZN, 1.15 a.m. (Tuesday)
Premier League: SS Select 1 & JioHotstar, 1.30 a.m. (Tuesday)
LaLiga: FanCode, 1.30 a.m. (Tuesday)

Saransh and Solanki spin MP to clinical victory

The slow bowlers scalp three wickets apiece in a 217-run win against Karnataka; loss leaves the hosts with plenty to do in the race to the knockouts, Aneesh's half-century delays the inevitable

RANJI TROPHY

Sports Bureau
BENGALURU

Karnataka needed to show fight on the final day of its Elite 'B' Ranji Trophy fixture against Madhya Pradesh here on Sunday if it was to escape with a draw.

But it was not to be, as a second straight batting collapse at Alur (1) grounds handed Madhya Pradesh a 217-run victory.

The reverse put Karnataka on shaky ground in the race to grab the two knockout spots from the group.

From being the table-topper, Karnataka (21 points) has slipped to the third spot.

Maharashtra (24 points) and Madhya Pradesh (22 points) have moved ahead, leaving Karnataka with plenty of work to do in its last fixture against Punjab.

The day began with Madhya Pradesh adding 25 runs to its overnight total, declaring on 229 for eight. This left Karnataka with an improbable target of 362 with nearly a full day's play left.

The hosts needed to bat for time, but wickets tumbled at regular intervals. Madhya Pradesh spinners Saransh Jain and Sagar Solanki kept a tight leash, picking up three wickets each.

Cock-a-hoop: Saransh is over the moon as he dismisses Kaverappa. K. MURALI KUMAR

Karnataka was further troubled by the absence of Karun Nair, who had split his webbing while fielding on Saturday.

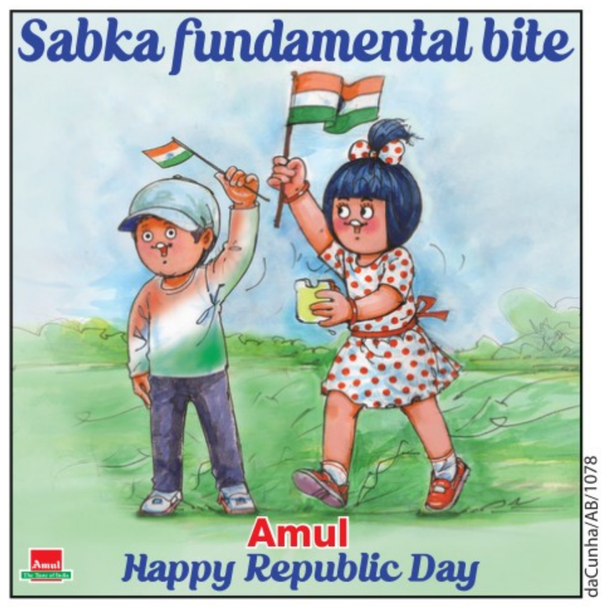
Nikin Jose batted in Karun's place, under the BCCI's "serious injury replacement substitute" rule which came into effect at the start of this domestic season.

Opener K.V. Aneesh (57, 142b, 7x4) played a lone hand, as he had done in Karnataka's first essay. The writing was on the wall when Aneesh was the seventh wicket to fall, caught behind off pacer Kuldeep Sen.

Nikin (26, 101b, 2x4) grafted hard, until he was trapped on the pads by Saransh.

Senior batters Mayank Agarwal (7) and Devdutt Padikkal (0) suffered another failure. Skipper Mayank nicked fast bowler Aryan Pandey to slip, while Padikkal registered his second duck of the outing when he was bowled in the same over. Vidyadhar Patil (26 not out) could only delay the inevitable.

The scores:
Madhya Pradesh — 1st innings: 323.
Karnataka — 1st innings: 191.
Madhya Pradesh — 2nd innings: Yash Dubey lbw b Shikhar 17, Himanshu Mantri b Shreyas 96, Shubham Sharma b Vidyadhar 32, Rajat Patidar b Vidyadhar 0, Venkatesh Iyer b Shreyas 1, Akshat Raghuwanshi b Shikhar 13, Saransh Jain retd. hurt 15, Sagar Solanki lbw b Vidyadhar 13, Aryan Pandey c Mayank b Vidyadhar 18, Kumar Kartikeya (not out) 11; Extras (w-8, b-5): 13; Total (for eight wkts. decl. in 75.1 overs): 229.
Fall of wickets: 1-38, 2-96, 3-96, 4-99, 5-123, 6-179, 7-212, 8-229.
Karnataka bowling: Kaverappa 14-4-32-0, Vidyadhar 18-5-54-4, Vyshak 11-1-39-0, Shikhar 11-0-41-2, Shreyas 21.1-3-58-2.
Karnataka — 2nd innings: K.V. Aneesh c Mantri b Kuldeep 57, Mayank Agarwal c Akshat b Aryan 7, Devdutt Padikkal b Aryan 0, Nikin Jose (sub) lbw b Saransh 26, Shreyas Gopal b Solanki 1, Abhinav Manohar lbw b Solanki 6, K.L. Shrijith c&b Solanki 0, Vidyadhar Patil (not out) 26, V. Vyshak c & b Kartikeya 8, Shikhar Shetty b Saransh 1, Vidwath Kaverappa b Saransh 0; Extras: (w-1, nb-2, b-5, lb-4): 12; Total (in 67.5 overs): 144.
Fall of wickets: 1-15, 2-15, 3-76, 4-77, 5-91, 6-91, 7-114, 8-133, 9-144.
Madhya Pradesh bowling: Aryan 7-4-9-2, Saransh 19.5-4-37-3, Kartikeya 18-6-42-1, Kuldeep 9-1-27-1, Solanki 14-5-20-3.



SCOREBOARD

Elite: Group A: At Bhubaneswar: Tamil Nadu 286 & 316 bt Odisha 148 & 247 in 83.5 overs (Subhranshu Senapati 55, Anil Parida 98). **Points: Tamil Nadu 6(11), Odisha 0 (7).**
At Anantapur: Vidarbha 295 & 191 lost to Andhra Pradesh 228 & 259/2 in 56.1 overs (K.S. Bharat 43, Shaik Rasheed 132 n.o., Ricky Bhui 64 n.o.). **Andhra 6(28), Vidarbha 0(25).**
At Lucknow: Jharkhand 561/6 decl. bt Uttar Pradesh 176 & 84 in 27.4 overs (Saurabh Kumar 5/16). **Jharkhand 7(25), UP 0(17).**
Group B: At Pune: Goa 209 & 248 in 97 overs (Abhinav Tejrana 109, Darshan Misal 65, Jalaj Saxena 5/81, Hitesh Walunj 4/63) lost to Maharashtra 350 & 109/2 in 21.1 overs (Arshin Kulkarni 52 n.o.). **Maharashtra 6(24), Goa 0(11).**
At Bengaluru: Madhya Pradesh 323 & 229/8 decl. in 75.1 overs (Himanshu Mantri 96, Vidyadhar Patil 4/54) bt Karnataka 191 & 144 in 67.5 overs (K.V. Aneesh 57). **MP 6(22), Karnataka 0(21).**
Group C: At Agartala: Tripura 266 & 258 in 90.3 overs (Bikramjit Debnath 48, Sentu Sarkar 57 n.o., Mayank Mishra 4/80) lost to Uttarakhand 301 & 224/1 in 65 overs (Bhupen Lalwani 100 n.o., Kunal Chandela 83 n.o.). **Uttarakhand 6(22), Tripura 0(6).**
At Fulung: Assam 247 & 158 in 64.3 overs (Mukhtar Hussain 46) lost to Haryana 236 & 175/1 in 29.3 overs (Ankit Kumar 74 n.o., Ashish Siwach 59 n.o.). **Haryana 6(24), Assam 0(4).**
At Kalyani: Bengal 519 bt Services 186 & 287 in 75 overs (Mohit Ahlawat 62, Rajat Paliwal 83, Jayant Goyat 68 n.o., Mohammed Shami 5/51). **Bengal 7(30), Services 0(19).**
At Nadiad: Gujarat 175 & 347 lost to Railways 424 & 99/2 in 20.5 overs (Vivek Singh 42). **Railways 6(17), Gujarat 0(15).**
Group D: At Jaipur: Himachal Pradesh 406 & 243/8 decl. in 58 overs (Innesh Mahajan 42, Ankush Bains 93, Akash Vashisht 44 n.o., Manav Suthar 4/79) drew with Rajasthan 342 & 100/5 in 40 overs. **HP 3(8), Rajasthan 1(14).**
At Bengaluru: Delhi 216 & 422 in 102.3 overs (Sanat Sangwan 44, Priyansh Arya 82, Ayush Badoni 68, Ayush Doseja 129, Siddhant Sharma 44) drew with Chhattisgarh 505 & 57/3 in 8 overs. **Chhattisgarh 3(17), Delhi 1(9).**
At Hyderabad: Mumbai 560 & 12/1 in 3.2 overs bt Hyderabad 267 & 302 in 69.5 overs (K Himateja 43, Chama Milind 85, Musheer Khan 5/79). **Mumbai 6(30), Hyderabad 0(13).**
At Puducherry: Pondicherry 233 drew with Jammu & Kashmir 150/6 in 60 overs. *No play on final day.* **Pondicherry 1(6), J&K 1(21)**
Plate: Final (Day 4): At Patna: Bihar 522 & 505/5 in 118 overs (Piyush Singh 216 n.o., Khalid Alam 81, Bipin Saurabh 52, Raghuvendra Pratap Singh 90 n.o.) vs. Manipur 264.

Mohsin's eight-for tightens Karnataka's grip

Sports Bureau
BENGALURU

Off-spinner Mohsin Khan ran through Chandigarh (8/114) as Karnataka tightened its grip on the under-23 C.K. Nayudu Trophy encounter at the Alur grounds here on Sunday.

On day three, Chandigarh, from an overnight 98 for three, was bundled out for 283 and then reduced to 55 for three in the second essay following on.

Apart from Mohsin's eight, the two other wickets fell to run outs, and in the second innings, L. Manvanth Kumar took two and Mohsin one. The visitors are now 296 adrift with a day's play left.

Scintillating bowling: Mohsin ran through the Chandigarh line-up with his off-spin. K. MURALI KUMAR

The scores:
Karnataka 634/4 in 138.2 overs vs. Chandigarh 283 in 107 overs (Dushyant 59, Aarush Bhandari 63, Mohsin Khan 8/114) & 55/3 in 28 overs.

Sainyam and Gaurav win 10m air pistol trial 2 finals

SHOOTING

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Sainyam of Chandigarh and Gaurav Kumar of Uttar Pradesh came on top in the women's and men's 10m air pistol trial 2 finals as the National selection trials 1 & 2 concluded here on Sunday.

Top three: Men: 1. Sainyam scored 243.1 points, 2. Rhythm Sangwan 237.7, 3. Meenu Pathak 218.5.
Women: 1. Gaurav 245.5, 2. Yogesh Kumar 244.6, 3. Harsh Swami 221.9.

Rauf omitted from Pakistan's T20 WC squad

Agence France-Presse
LAHORE

Pakistan left out express pacer Haris Rauf from the Salman Agha-led 15-man squad named on Sunday for the Twenty20 World Cup jointly hosted by India and Sri Lanka.

However, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Mohsin Naqvi on Sunday dismissed the impression that the announcement of the World Cup squad meant that the country has decided to take part. "We are waiting for the government's advice and whatever they tell us to do, we will do it.

The squad: Salman Agha (Capt.), Abrar Ahmed, Babar Azam, Faheem Ashraf, Fakhar Zaman, Khawaja Nafay, Mohammad Nawaz, Salman Mirza, Naseem Shah, Sahibzada Farhan, Saim Ayub, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Shadab Khan, Usman Khan and Usman Tariq.

Gukesh suffers his second loss in a row

CHESS

Press Trust of India
WIJK AAN ZEE

D. Gukesh suffered his second defeat in a row and third in the event, going down to Anish Giri in the seventh round of Tata Steel Masters chess here.

For Gukesh, things did not go well in an English opening as white when Anish got the initiative rolling in his favour with a central bind.

By the time, Gukesh was able to remove the bind his position had worsened and the Dutchman made no mistakes.

On what turned out to be a tough day for Indians, Arjun Erigaisi found himself on the receiving end against Yagiz Kaan Erdogmus of Turkey.

Arjun felt the heat right from the opening and it was consistent pressure from Erdogmus that became impossible for the Indian to handle even after trade of Queens.

Aravindh Chithambaram also ended up losing with black against Dutchman Jorden van Foreest while R. Praggnanandhaa was held Matthias Bluebaum of Germany.

With six rounds still to come, Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan extended his lead by a full point.

Seventh round results: Jorden van Foreest (Ned, 4) bt Aravindh Chithambaram (Ind, 2); D. Gukesh (Ind, 3) lost to Anish Giri (Ned, 3); Arjun Erigaisi (Ind, 3) lost to Yagiz Kaan Erdogmus (Tur, 4); R. Praggnanandhaa (Ind, 2.5) drew with Matthias Bluebaum (Ger, 3.5); Vincent Keymer (Ger, 3.5) lost to Nodirbek Abdusattorov (Uzb, 5.5); Javokhir Sindarov (Uzb, 4.5) drew with Hans Moke Niemann (USA, 4); Thai Dai Van Nguyen (Cze, 2.5) drew with Vladimir Fedoseev (Slo, 4).

Kothari.

Kothari retains National billiards title

Press Trust of India
BAHADURGARH (HARYANA)

Sourav Kothari retained the senior men's National billiards title with a commanding 4-0 victory over S. Shrikrishna here on Saturday. PSPB's Kothari defeated his teammate 151 (142-unfinished)-0, 150(138-unfinished)-2, 150(150)-103 (92), 150-124(72).

Teenagers Ishaan and Sai Shiva rule the roost

MOTORSPORTS

Sports Bureau
CHENNAI

Seventeen-year-olds Ishaan Madesh and Sai Shiva Makesh Sankaran won the premier MRF Formula 2000 and Formula 1600 titles respectively as the fourth and final round of the MRF MMSC FMSCI National car racing championship concluded at the Madras International Circuit, here on Sunday.

Ishaan, the reigning National Karting champion, finished the weekend and the season with a triple crown as he overcame a stiff resistance from Arjun Chheda, who finished runner-up in the championship standings. Sai Shiva won one of the three races to emerge National champion, sealing the title with a race to spare.

Winning driver: Ishaan Madesh in his F2000 finished the season with a triple crown.

The results (Provisional, all Race 2 of 10 laps, Race 3 of 8 laps unless mentioned): MRF F2000: Race-2: 1. Ishaan Madesh (21min, 00.736sec); 2. Arjun Chheda (21:14.310); 3. Shivesh Selvarathnam (21:19.348). **Race-3:** 1. Ishaan (12:47.405); 2. Chheda (12:52.727); 3. Tarun M.B. (13:06.385). **Champion driver:** Ishaan.
MRF F1600: Race-2: 1. Sai Shiva Makesh Sankaran (21:56.732); 2. Nigel Abraham Thomas (22:02.561); 3. Arjun S. Nair (22:04.050). **Race-3:** 1. Nigel (13:57.378); 2. Sai Shiva (14:06.172); 3. Gyan S. (14:17.826). **Champion driver:** Sai Shiva.
Indian Touring Cars: Race-2: 1. Karna Kadur (Arka Motorsports) (19:15.138); 2. Biren Pithawalla (Team N1 Racing) (19:25.275); 3. Arjun Balu (Race Concepts Motorsports) (19:25.733). **Race-3:** 1. Balu (14:55.495); 2. Pithawalla (15:09.053); 3. Rithesh Rai (Buzzing Hornet) (15:15.953). **Champion driver:** Pithawalla. **Team:** Buzzing Hornet Motorsports.
ITC 1625: Race-2: 1. Nikanth Rambalu (Performance Racing) (20:22.211). **Race-3:** 1. Rambalu (16:10.997); 2. Vidyaprakash Damodaran (Performance Racing) (16:11.924). **Champion driver:** Vidyaprakash. **Team:** Performance Racing.
Indian Junior Touring Cars: Race-2: 1. Deepak Ravikumar (Performance Racing) (20:03.408); 2. R.P. Raja Rajan (Performance Racing) (20:39.977); 3. Jarshan Anand (DB Motorsports) (21:07.201). **Race-3:** 1. Viswas Vijayaraj (Performance Racing) (15:31.018); 2. Deepak (15:34.664); 3. Raja Rajan (16:10.218). **Champion driver:** Rithvik Thomas (Race Concepts). **Team:** Performance Racing.
Super Stock: Race-2: 1. Anirudha Arvind (DTS Racing) (21:12.952); 2. Diljith T.S. (DTS Racing) (19:24.991 +1 lap); 3. Deepa S. John (DTS Racing) (19:37.628+1 lap). **Race-3:** 1. Dilijith (16:35.981); 2. Krishanu Dutta Bhuyan (Zion Racing) (16:51.049); 3. Anirudha (16:55.613). **Champion driver:** Diljith. **Team:** DTS Racing.
Formula LGB 1300: Race-2 (Open and Junior): 1. Bhuvan Bonu (MSPORT) (21:44.649); 2. Aditya Patnaik (Momentum Motorsports) (21:53.533); 3. Joel Joseph (DTS Racing) (21:54.505). **Race-3 (Open and Junior):** 1. Vinith Kumar (DTS Racing) (15:09.078); 2. Lokithlingeash Ravi (DTS Racing) (15:09.805); 3. Joel Joseph (DTS Racing) (15:10.039). **Champion driver:** Joel. **Team:** DTS Racing.
MRF Saloons: Race-2 (9 laps): 1. Akshay Muralidharan (27:04.714); 2. Tarushi Vikram (27:30.993); 3. Dr M.M. Annamallia (27:33.844). **Race-3:** 1. Tarushi (17:56.618); 2. Mohammed Arafath (16:01.703+1 lap); 3. Salvius Karthik Roy 16:11.300+1 lap). **Champion driver:** Akshay).
Volkswagen Polo Cup: Race-2: 1. Ojas Surve (26:21.764); 2. Aditya Patnaik (26:56.419); 3. Aman Nagdev (27:04.902). **Race-3:** 1. Patnaik (15:43.686); 2. Nagdev (15:48.564); 3. Pratikk Sonawane (15:50.882). **Race-4 (8 laps):** 1. Nagdev (15:30.275); 2. Ojas Surve (15:31.585); 3. Patnaik (1538:083). **Champion driver:** Nagdev.